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Issue 770 January 2016
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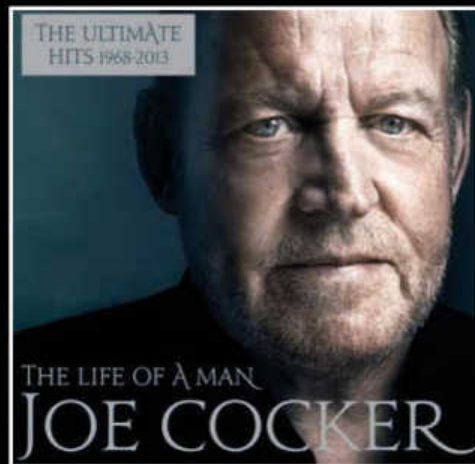
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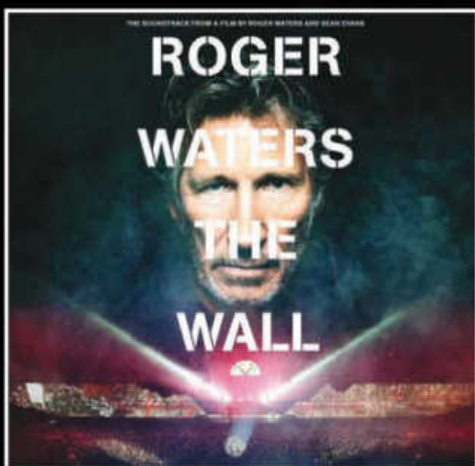
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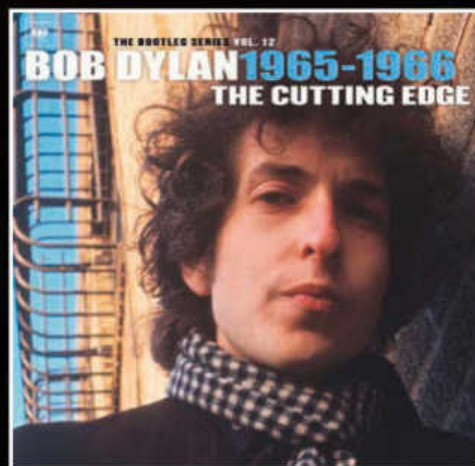
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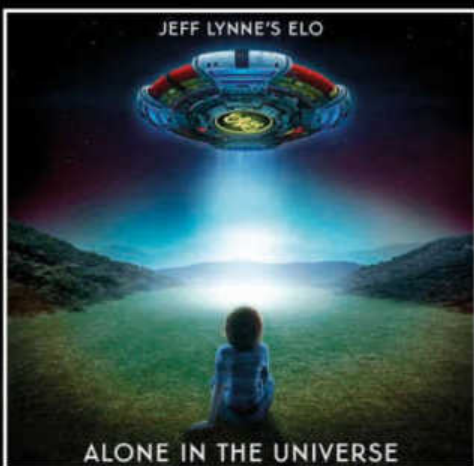


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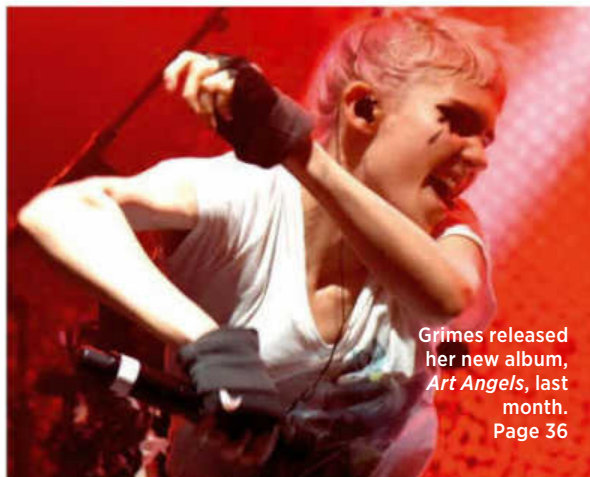
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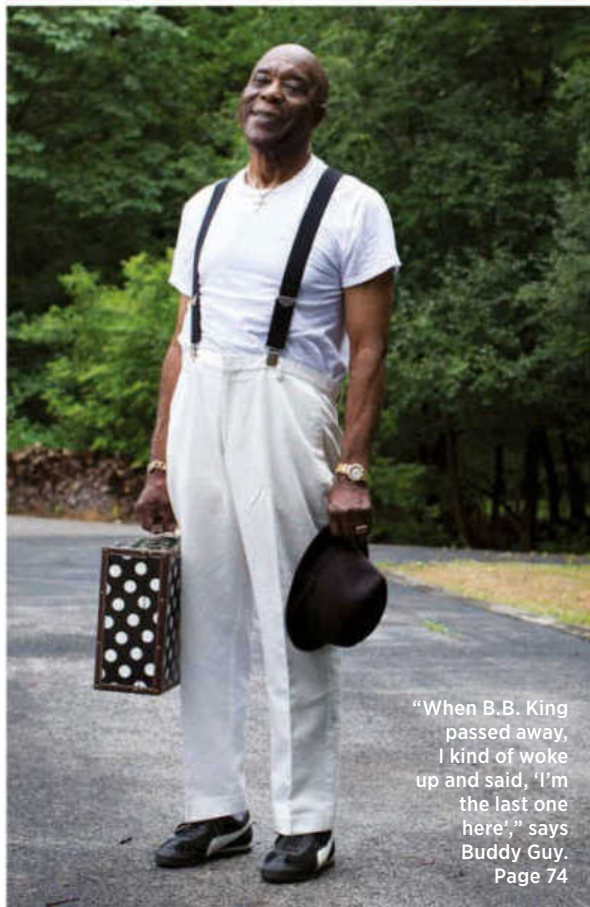
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AVAILABLE NOW



Grimes released her new album, *Art Angels*, last month. Page 36



"When B.B. King passed away, I kind of woke up and said, 'I'm the last one here,'" says Buddy Guy. Page 74



Billy Gibbons (with ZZ Top) takes a look at his catalogue. Page 70

RS770

"ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS"

FEATURES

The Weeknd's Dark Twisted Fantasy

The former R&B mystery man wants to be your Michael Jackson. *By* JOSH EELLS56

She's the One

The triumphant return of post-heartbreak Adele. *By* BRIAN HIATT.....62

My Life in 15 Songs: Billy Gibbons

ZZ Top guitarist on hanging with Hendrix and going New Wave. *By* DAVID FRICKE70

King Bee

Buddy Guy may be the last bluesman of his era, but his mojo is still working. *By* PATRICK DOYLE74

The Dark Net

Inside the Web's secret space for criminals, arms traffickers and hackers – all funded by the U.S. government. *By* DAVID KUSHNER80

ROCK & ROLL

Phil Collins' Unlikely Return

Inside the singer's dark days and surprise comeback.15

Q&A Roger Waters

On his new concept LP, feuding with Howard Stern and being terrified of Hillary Clinton20

Cobain's Lost Tapes

New set unearths trove of home recordings.....30

Grimes in the Big Time

The oddball produces all her own music and has Jay Z on her team, a new album and big dreams.....36

DEPARTMENTS

RANDOM NOTES

Mick Jagger bowls over Nashville and Ozzy goes on a monumental trip12

RECORD REVIEWS

Bruce Springsteen

The Boss answers a 35-year old question.....89

MOVIES

Suffragette

The struggle for early women's rights102

THE LAST PAGE

Albert Hammond Jr

On being aggressive with cops and loving Thor.106

ON THE COVER Adele photographed in London on October 6th, 2015, by **Theo Wenner**.

Styling by Gaelle Paul. Hair by Kerry Warn. Makeup by Liz Pugh. Nails by Jenny Longworth.

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LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE



Ginger Snap

I CAN FORGIVE YOU MANY things, ROLLING STONE. I could even forgive putting the Boston Bomber on the cover. But Ed Sheeran? Sure, he's sold a gazillion records, but since when has that been an indication of quality? Don't forget, a million flies like shit.

*Stephen Hewson,
Clifton Hill, Vic*

FINALLY! A COVER OF ROLLING STONE I feel proud to carry on the bus! Thanks for putting Ed Sheeran on the cover, and for taking us backstage with him in the UK. In this age of here-today-gone-later-to-day pop stars and autotuned pop starlets, how refreshing to find an artist who writes from the heart, and seems so unaffected by fame.

*Katrina Swift
Clearview, SA*



WRITE TO US AND WIN

Every letter published in this issue will win a copy of David Gilmour's *Rattle That Lock* (\$29.99), Bob Dylan's *The Best of the Cutting Edge* (\$34.99) and Roger Waters' *The Wall* (\$29.99). Write to us and tell us your thoughts!

The Vinyl Straw

ONCE AGAIN THE RECORD companies have missed the mark. I refer to the increased interest in vinyl – and, more pertinently, the exorbitant prices we're being asked to pay. The reason people started stealing music is because record companies made us pay \$30 or even \$35 for a CD. Then we got access to free music illegally and, what do you know, chose that instead. Now we're suddenly being asked to pay up to \$60 for

some covers he recorded have been unearthed, so sure, why not foist them on the public? And this album of unreleased Kurt Cobain songs is just as bad – do you think he really wanted his bedroom noodlings released? Have some respect.

*Jamie McCallister,
Downer, ACT*

Guns N' Woes

I'VE JUST READ THE NEWS that Guns N'Roses are about to reform. Please, God, let this

“Do you think Kurt Cobain really wanted his bedroom noodlings released? Have some respect.”

new releases on vinyl. I recently went to buy Robert Forster's album, and it was \$50. Not surprisingly, I put it down and walked out. Why do record companies have this constant urge to treat us fans like fools with bottomless pockets? I'm afraid the joke's on them.

*David Thornton
Annandale, NSW*

Let It Be

I SEE THERE'S A – WAIT FOR it – “new” Jeff Buckley album coming out! That man has been so prolific in death. Now

be a mistake! GN'R were a beautiful fireball that burned bright and then exploded. Do we really need to see them reform as tired 50-year-olds?

*Doug Peters,
Cairns, Qld*

Blurred Lines

SO DAMON ALBARN TRIES to avoid playing with Blur like the plague? [RS 769] Do us a favour then and stop. Why should we pay to watch you go through the motions?

*Samantha Coburn,
Artarmon, NSW*

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VIDEO

ANOTHER SIDE OF DAVID DUCHOVNY

The first episode in our new series “Off the Clock”, about artists and their hobbies: The actor embarks on a side career as a singer-songwriter while awaiting the return of *The X-Files* in early 2016. “For me to get up and sing live is insane,” says Duchovny.



EXCLUSIVE

ON THE GROUND AT FAIRGROUND FESTIVAL

We go behind the scenes at the new boutique festival with Father John Misty, Mercury Rev and Unknown Mortal Orchestra



Joel circa 1970

LIST

BAD STARTS TO GREAT CAREERS

Even the best can sometimes start out on the wrong foot. We ranked the worst-ever debut albums, by artists such as Billy Joel, George Harrison and Lou Reed



GALLERY

10 ARTISTS YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT AWAY!

When people ask you what new music they should be listening to, you should have this page bookmarked. Seriously.



EXCLUSIVE

27 YEARS OF BLUESFEST - PETER NOBLE

In the lead up to the massive Bluesfest 2016, we catch up with festival boss Peter Noble as he remembers some of the highlights of the epic festival.



Neko Case

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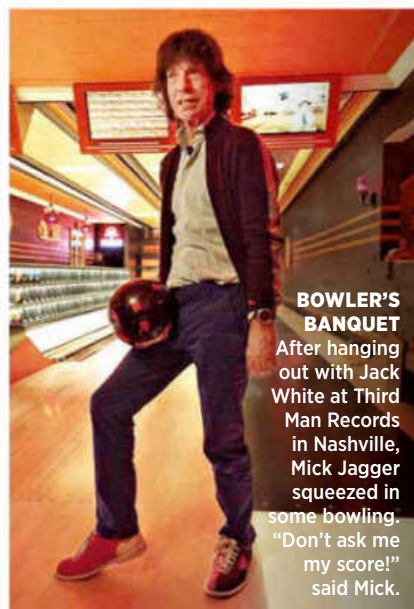
"Millions are in love with Metallica and Black Sabbath. I just thought they were great jokes." —Keith Richards

Random Notes



Run, Alicia, Run

Alicia Keys had already run one marathon in her life – in 2007, in Greece – and swore never again. So when her brother urged her to join him in the New York City Marathon, "My first instinct was 'hell no,'" said Keys, "but [then] I thought, 'Why not?'" As part of her training, Keys meditated, listened to Eckhart Tolle books and ran for about an hour a day. She finished in a respectable five hours, 50 minutes: "What got me through was seeing incredible runners with prosthetic legs or a man leading a blind runner. This was the surge of strength I needed!"



BOWLER'S BANQUET

After hanging out with Jack White at Third Man Records in Nashville, Mick Jagger squeezed in some bowling. "Don't ask me my score!" said Mick.



SILVIO RETURNS

Steve Van Zandt reunited with *Sopranos* alumni for a one-off charity play. "It's easier to face 50,000 people in a stadium," he says of his theatre debut.



MOUNT OZZMORE

Black Sabbath's final tour kicks off in January, but before that Ozzy and his son Jack are visiting several national monuments for a new History Channel show.



JT Gets in a Memphis Groove

At his induction into the Memphis Music Hall of Fame, Justin Timberlake met Stax heroes like William Bell, Steve Cropper and "Soul Man" Dave Porter (from left). "This is the fucking coolest thing that's ever happened to me," JT said in a tearful speech.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GETTY IMAGES; MICK JAGGER/INSTAGRAM; GETTY IMAGES; STEVE ROBERTS/MEMPHIS MUSIC HALL OF FAME; OZZY OSBOURNE/INSTAGRAM



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Rock & Roll

Phil Collins' Unlikely Return

Inside the singer's dark days and plans for a comeback
By Andy Greene

SITTING ON A COUCH IN THE MASTER bedroom of his new \$33 million Miami Beach mansion, Phil Collins doesn't look like a man gearing up for a huge comeback. The 64-year-old just had surgery to repair nerves in his back, and even sitting up is a monumental challenge. His voice is soft and groggy – that is, until conversation turns to his future plans.

"I'm no longer officially retired," he says, growing animated. "The horse is out of the stable, and I'm [Cont. on 16]"

TAKE A GOOD LOOK
Collins onstage in London, 2010.

PHIL COLLINS

[Cont. from 15] raring to go." Collins hasn't played live since 2010 – and hasn't recorded in more than a decade. "My kids are 10 and 14, and they want to see what their dad does," he says. "They were in nappies when I was last on the road."

Last year, Collins secretly reconvened his solo band, with Jason Bonham on drums, for a three-week rehearsal. His manager is laying early groundwork for a tour, though exact plans are still up in the air. Collins suffered major nerve damage to his hands while drumming on the 2007 Genesis reunion tour, but he's hopeful his back operation will restore his skills. "After surgery, the doctor said to me that my vital signs were all there," he says. "He said, 'If you want to play drums again, all you have to do is practice.'"



NO JACKET REQUIRED Collins with his son Nicholas in Deerfield Beach, Florida, last June.

Even as Collins is barely able to stand, he's having a new studio set up on the ground floor of his house, where he hopes to cut a new album. "No matter what happens," he says, "I can still play piano and sing. I'll settle for the parts of me I can possibly do."

Collins is returning at a time when his musical legacy is stronger than ever, perhaps surprisingly. In the 1980s, Collins was derided by rock critics as the epitome of soft-rock cheese, but since he retreated from the spotlight, he's gained new respect. "In the Air Tonight" is widely hailed as a masterpiece and a pop-culture touchstone (Mike Tyson sang along to it in *The Hangover*; Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors sang to it in a viral video). Even Adele reached out to him about possibly co-writing songs for her new album.

His last album of new material was 2002's *Testify*, and in 2011, he announced

his retirement from public life, opting to focus on his children and his favourite hobby, collecting Alamo artifacts. "I sometimes think, 'I'm going to write this Phil Collins character out of the story,'" he told *ROLLING STONE* that year. "Phil Collins will just disappear or be murdered in some hotel bedroom, and people will say, 'What happened to Phil?' The answer will be, 'He got murdered, but, yeah, anyway, let's carry on.'"

His retirement plan took a severe blow, however, when his ex-wife moved with their two young sons to Miami, far from his main home near Geneva, Switzerland. "It left me with a lot of time on my hands to think about what happened," he says. "I went through a few bits of darkness, drinking too much." He ultimately drank to the point where he developed pancreatitis, and even tried rehab for a week before realising it wasn't for him. "I killed my hours watching TV and drinking, and it almost killed me," he says. "But I haven't had a drink in three years."

After sobering up, Collins bought the 12,000-square-foot Miami Beach home (former owner: Jennifer Lopez) this year, right down the road from Barry Gibb, and began seeing his boys nearly every day. He even set up a soundproof room where 14-year-old Nicholas could practice with his band.

Things seemed perfect until Collins woke one morning and discovered that he couldn't move his right foot. "I had an MRI, and my back and hips were just shot," he says. "The doctor had to go in there, work on the sciatic nerve and take my back apart and unscramble the mess."

For now, Collins is focused on deluxe editions of his solo albums, which hit shelves January 29th. They're packed with demos, outtakes and alternate versions of songs from throughout his career. "I got very involved in these reissues," he says. "We even re-shot all the covers, which was my idea. I'm easily flattered. If people rediscover the old stuff and show interest, it would be silly to not make more music."

News of Collins' return is likely to excite Genesis fans, but he's noncommittal about the idea of another reunion of the band. "Let's start with this [solo] bit first," he says. "I love the guys. I would just prefer to do this first. For now, let's just see how this goes."



THE BEATLES ON FILM

"The Beatles were the forerunners of the music video," says Michael Lindsay-Hogg, who directed many of their videos. "They made them because they didn't want to schlep around to the TV stations miming their songs. They were so powerful, the TV stations would take their product rather than not have them at all." The new deluxe 1+ DVD/Blu-ray collection is a treasure of Beatles footage – promo videos, TV appearances and rare clips, plus unreleased footage and commentary from Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr. Here are four of the fabbest moments.

'I Feel Fine' 1965

The Beatles trooped into Twickenham Film Studios on November 23rd, 1965, to grind out five quickie promo videos. They took a lunch break for "I Feel Fine" – and instead of miming with their guitars, they munched fish and chips. Manager Brian Epstein nixed the footage – he was horrified that the world would see the boys eating with greasy fingers.

'We Can Work It Out' 1965

The band play it straight, until John Lennon sets out to make McCartney crack up. By the end, Lennon's playing the organ with his feet.

'Penny Lane' 1967

The psychedelic video with the lads on horseback – with priceless DVD commentary. "My big memory of that shoot is all of us saying, 'Where's Ringo?'" McCartney says. "'That's him, disappearing over the horizon on that galloping white horse!'"

'Hey Bulldog' 1968

The film crew went to Abbey Road to shoot a video for "Lady Madonna" – but the Beatles didn't feel like lip-syncing, because they were absorbed in cutting a new song. Result: astounding footage of the band at work.

ROB SHEFFIELD

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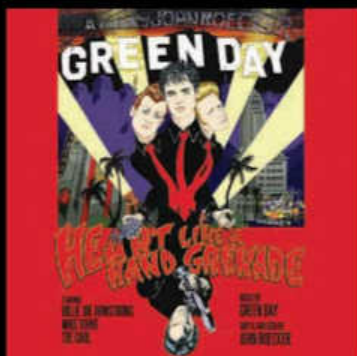


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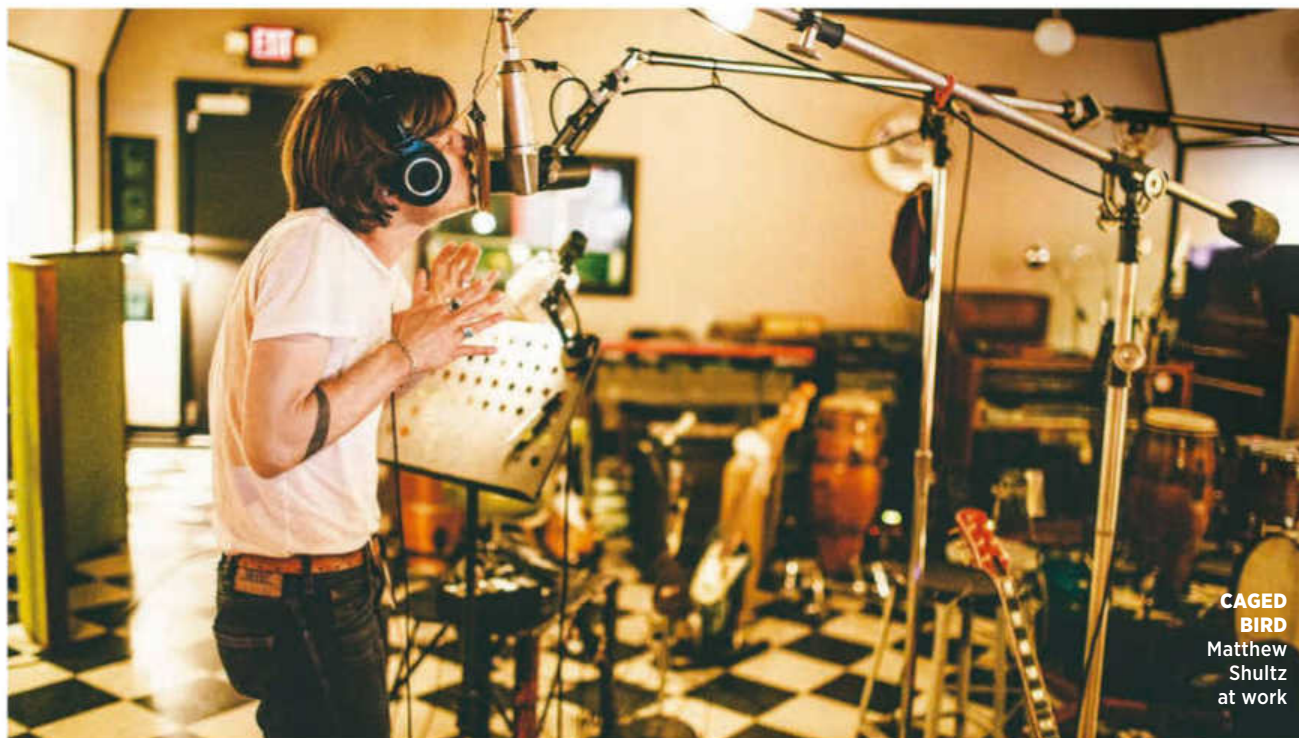
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**CAGED
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Matthew
Shultz
at work

Cage the Elephant's Garage-Rock

Kentucky band teams with Dan Auerbach for a more adventurous version of its stomping sound

CAGE THE ELEPHANT GUITARIST Brad Shultz still sounds embarrassed about the night he asked Dan Auerbach to work with his band, which opened for the Black Keys last year. "I was like, 'Let me show you some songs, dude! We gotta do some tracks together!'" Shultz says. "Typical stuff – I was really wasted."

The Kentucky group endured a traumatic period surrounding 2013's Gram-

my-nominated *Melophobia*, with intra-band beefs resulting in the exit of lead guitarist Lincoln Parish. "The last record was a living hell," Shultz says. "We were going through so much turmoil."

Auerbach agreed to produce Cage's fourth album, *Tell Me I'm Pretty* (due December 18th), in Nashville. He ended up giving the band a fresh start and a fresh sound. In the studio, he would often play the bandmates obscure Afrobeat or garage-rock records before a take. "It was an experiment to knock us out of what was comfortable," singer Matthew Shultz says. Auerbach, who pitched in with guitar and keyboards on the LP, also emphasised first-take vocals. "I'd say, 'But wait! I

think that's a bad note there!'" Matthew recalls. "But it stayed."

Reflecting those approaches – as well as Brad's deep dive into Sixties bands like the Zombies and Tommy James – *Tell Me I'm Pretty* recalls everything from psychedelic bubblegum pop to, not coincidentally, the spare tautness of the Black Keys. For all the group's difficulties, Brad feels that Cage emerged sane and unified after wrapping up the album in a brisk three and a half weeks. "Sometimes you have to take an immense amount of stress to bring things to a head," he says. "This record brought us back to being those kids in Bowling Green."

DAVID BROWNE

STUDIO NOTES

RIHANNA AND KANYE MAKE AN ART PROJECT

"It's hard to actually put them all on the same album," Rihanna said of the eclectic songs on *Anti*, her upcoming first album in three years. Kanye West executive-produced the LP, and the snippets and leaks that surfaced (as well as the cover image, a piece by artist Roy Nuchum built around a childhood photo of RiRi) suggest an arty left turn for the R&B superstar.

JON DOLAN



TOBY MARTIN'S SOUND OF THE SUBURBS

The Youth Group frontman's latest solo album was facilitated by Urban Theatre Projects. Written in and inspired by the multi-cultural Sydney suburb of Bankstown, it features local musicians who play traditional Arabic and Vietnamese music. "I wanted to recognise the diversity of Bankstown – and what Bankstown sounds like – through the music," he says.

ROD YATES





R. Kelly Tries It All On 'The Buffet'

Country, blues and a duet with an estranged daughter – it's all there on Kelly's most adventurous album ever

I AM MUSIC AND I WANT PEOPLE to know me as music," says R. Kelly. "Not some R&B guy." Bearded and nursing a cigar, the 48-year-old singer-songwriter-producer is at New York's Jungle City Studios one September night, spinning tracks from his upcoming 13th album, *The Buffet* (due this month). Kelly pared down more than 450 songs for the release, which is his most ambitious ever – full of twists on modern hip-hop, sexy Chicago stepping music, street-corner doo-wop, fiery blues rock and, most surprisingly, a country song, "Barely Breathing". "I love country music," says Kelly. "Because country music tells stories, and I tell stories."

Kelly recorded most of *The Buffet* at his Sylvester studio in Chicago over the past two years, occasionally falling asleep in his chair during marathon sessions, then waking up and starting again. When he wasn't going country, Kelly focused on creating new sounds that fit modern hip-hop radio, including Future-style rap gargles and watery alt-R&B. Kelly even tries exuberant ad-libs that sound like young Atlanta-rap hitmakers Migos. "Music changes, and you get in line or you get left

behind," he says. "I'm really intrigued with the way rappers today have totally flipped the rap game with the flow. I like challenging myself and seeing if I can do that."

The emotional apex of *The Buffet* is "Be There", a duet with his once-estranged teenage daughter, a budding singer-songwriter who goes by Ariiraye'. Kelly hadn't seen her in three years when they had a chance run-in at a mall. After texting back and forth, he invited her to the studio. "She's very, very talented," he says. "She's just like me, man. She can really write. And it's scary. When she was in the studio, I taught her a lot. I showed her a few shortcuts on how to get through the song and how to get it done, and she loved all of that." Despite the rapport, it took some convincing to get Ariiraye' to appear on "Be There". "It was emotional for both of us," says Kelly. "At first, she was a little uncomfortable, but I told her how she could touch the hearts of a lot of girls out there that haven't seen their fathers."

The *Buffet* sessions were so productive they yielded seven country numbers and 17 songs that could one day turn into a blues album. "I just stay in tune," says Kelly, who has worked on recent hits for Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga. "It's like a piano that's been around for 30, 40 years. If you continue to tune it, it will continue to sound as fresh as any brand-new piano."

CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

CHECKING IN

BONNIE RAITT GETS PERSONAL

Raitt digs deep, gets noisy with her longtime band on her first album since 2012

Bonnie Raitt's new studio album, *Dig in Deep*, won't be out until February, but the singer-guitarist has already received her first rave review. "I got an e-mail from Jackson," Raitt says, meaning her friend Jackson Browne. "He said, 'I love the way you use the band as a band. It really sounds cohesive.'"

The LP title comes from a line in the opening stomp, "Unintended Consequence of Love". It is also Raitt's allusion to how she and her longtime studio-and-road band – guitarist George Marinelli, bassist James Hutchinson and drummer Ricky Fataar, with recent recruit Mike Finnigan on keyboards – "have become a unit that can dig deeper," she says, "into the grooves." Two covers come from the Eighties, freshened with blues-rock swagger and Raitt's torrid slide guitar: INXS' "Need You Tonight" and Los Lobos' "Shakin' Shakin' Shakes". "We make a lot of noise for four people and me," Raitt, 66, notes proudly.

Dig in Deep is her most personal record in years, with Raitt's highest tally of original songs since 1998's *Fundamental*. "I had a lot of loss," Raitt says, referring to the passing of her mother, Marjorie; father, John; and brother Steve, between 2004 and 2009. She points to the resurgent energy in the gospel-influenced "What You're Doin' to Me". "We all get shuttered down by life," she says. "And sometimes people blast the door open and pull you out."

DAVID FRICKE



Roger Waters

The former Pink Floyd leader on his new concept album, and why he's terrified of Hillary Clinton

By Andy Greene

ON DECEMBER 1ST, ROGER Waters released a CD/DVD set commemorating his three-year-long tour of *The Wall* – and he says he has new appreciation for why the Pink Floyd classic has endured. “People are just beginning, as they sleepwalk through imperial capitalism, to realise the law is being eroded, the military are taking over commerce, and the corporations have taken over government,” he says. “And that we the people no longer have a voice. *The Wall*, to some extent, is asking the question ‘Do you want a voice?’” Waters recently made headlines for his longtime role as a critic of Israel, drawing protest outside of a Long Island gig. He checked in one afternoon, offering sharp words for Howard Stern, Donald Trump and us, too.

Now that you're done with *The Wall*, what's next for you?

I have an entire demo [for his next album]. I'm in a room sitting with a guitar, all the demo recordings and a legal pad and a pen, shovelling things around and scribbling things down. It's an attempt to come up with a shape, a cartoon sketch of what this painting may be when it's finished. And the device that I'm using to do that is to think of it as an arena show. I'm trying to figure out how to juggle all these new tunes with old tunes as well into a cohesive arena show that I can get some bums into seats with. The basic question of the album is, “Why are we killing the children?”

So it's a concept album, I take it.

Yeah. Why change now?

You played *The Wall* 219 times between 2010 and 2013. Do you think you'll ever do it again?

If Israel works toward equality and actual, real, genuine democracy, with no apartheid or racism infecting the society, then I will go over there and play *The Wall* again. I have the bits and pieces of the stage stored, and the ones I haven't got stored, I will rebuild.

You've long favoured a cultural boycott of Israel, since you say its treatment of the Palestinians is apartheid. This has led some to label you an anti-Semite.

[Laughs] They try to. But the analogy is with the civil-rights struggle in the Southern states of the United States and pre-Mandela South Africa. The global civil society feels the same way that I do about the Israeli government. It's not the Israeli people, it's not Jews, it's not Judaism. I would never dream of attacking them.

Howard Stern accused you of wanting Jews to “go back to the concentration camp”. Do you have any response?

I wouldn't waste a single one of my precious breaths on that asshole. I guess I just did. That was a waste of breath, so let's move on.

What's your relationship like with the other members of Pink Floyd?

[Drummer] Nick Mason and I adore each other. There was a brief schism when I left the band, but now we're great friends. Rick [Wright]'s dead, sadly. And Syd [Barrett]'s dead, sadly. David [Gilmour] and I have never been friends at all, so we don't have anything to do with one another, and I'm content with all of that.

I'm sure it's annoying that everyone always asks you about a Pink Floyd reunion that will obviously never happen.

I will refer you to the answer I gave for Howard Stern on that question.

Can you summarise that?

[Shouting] No, I'm not going to! Why don't you just ask me my favourite fucking colour? You know, this can't get any more dumb than that. Everybody knows the answer. And everybody asks the question again and again! It's just so dumb. I'm sorry to get testy. You're just doing your job. **Let's talk about Donald Trump. Are you horrified he's doing so well in the polls?**

You can't look at any of the Republican candidates and not be horrified. They are so charged up with wanting to murder everybody in the world. I'll get into hot water for saying this, but their attitudes are so fascist. Trump thinks he's clever because he made a few bucks and has a crappy TV show.

Do you like Hillary Clinton?

She would be a better alternative than any of the Republican candidates I've seen. But the only person who has any credibility for me is Bernie Sanders. If I had a vote, and I don't, since I'm not a citizen, I would cast my lot with him. Hillary worries me. I worry she might want to become the first woman president to drop a nuclear bomb on somebody. There's something scarily hawkish about her. **You live in New York. If Trump becomes president, will you leave the country?**

No. If Trump wins, all of us of good heart need to stay here and organise and get rid of him as soon as possible, before he destroys the world.



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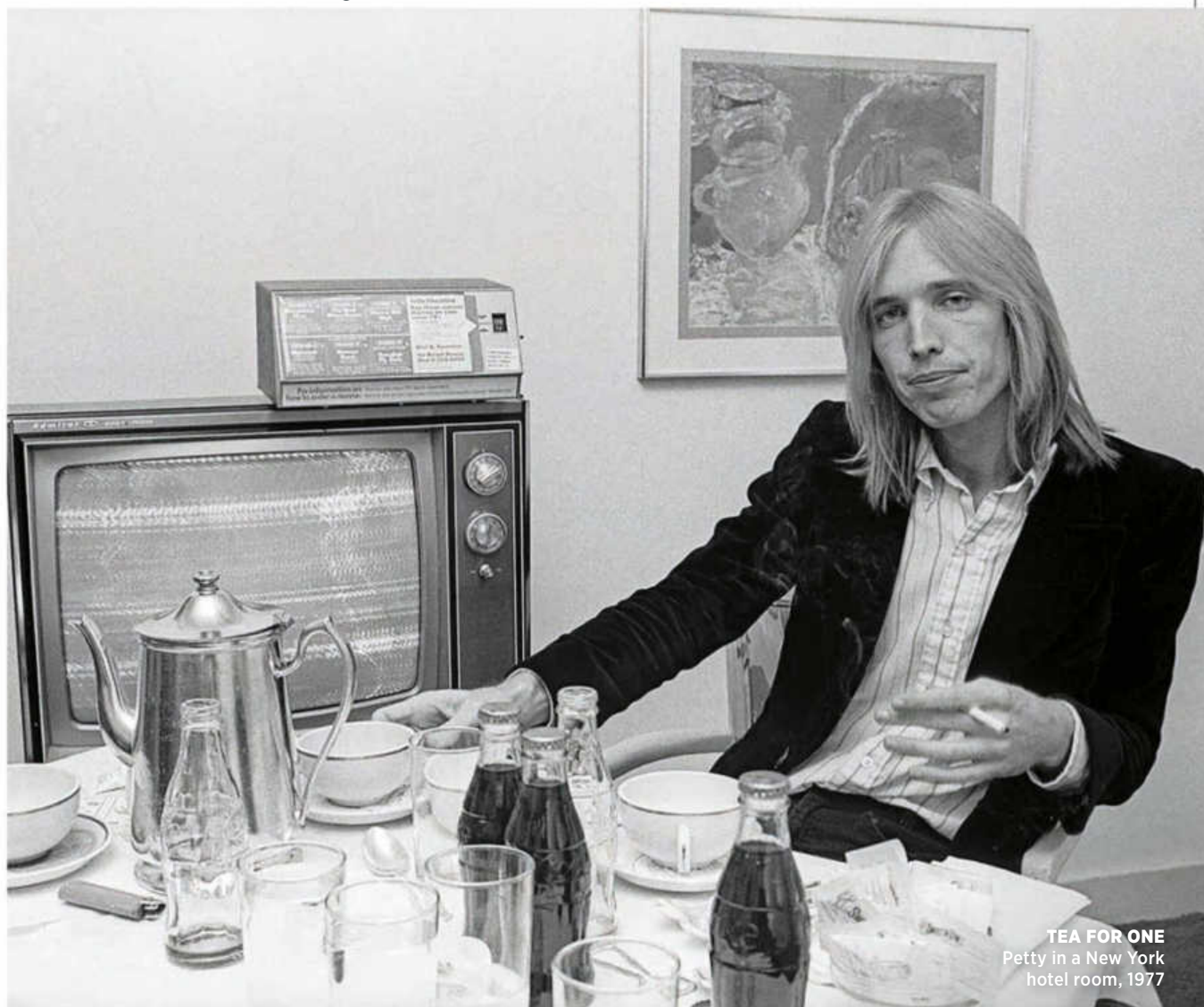
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Tom Petty's True Confessions



TEA FOR ONE
Petty in a New York
hotel room, 1977

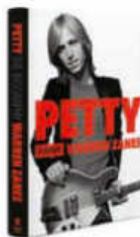
The singer opens up about the darkest period of his life for the first time in a definitive new biography

BY 1997, TOM PETTY'S LIFE WAS in shambles. His latest album, *She's the One*, had bombed commercially, and he'd just fired his longtime drummer, Stan Lynch of the Heartbreakers, after years of acrimony. Even worse, his 20-year marriage had just come to a bitter end. Living in a tiny house he calls a "chicken shack," he found a new way to deal with his pain: heroin. Before long, he was hooked. "Tried to go cold tur-

key, and that wouldn't work," he says in the new book *Petty: The Biography*. "It's an ugly fucking thing."

The book, by author and former Del Fuegos guitarist Warren Zanes, marks the first time Petty has ever talked about his heroin abuse publicly, but it's far from the only dark moment in the book. Petty and Zanes have decided to tell the unvarnished truth, and the result is not only the definitive account of Petty's life, but one of the best rock biographies in recent memory.

Zanes makes clear he's no impartial observer – in fact, he's a Petty superfan going way back. "American Girl" seemed



to be wide open for listeners to see themselves in the picture," Zanes writes in the preface. "I certainly saw myself. Something happened when that voice delivered those words in that way." The pair first met in 1986, when the Del Fuegos opened for Petty, and they stayed friends over the years, as the Del Fuegos broke up and Zanes became a teacher and historian and wrote an acclaimed book about the making of Dusty Springfield's *Dusty in Memphis*.

Their closeness seems to have helped Petty open up about the most painful chapters of his life, all the way back to his Florida childhood. He had a conten-

tious relationship with his father, Earl, who once beat him for shooting a slingshot at a passing Cadillac. "I was covered in raised welts, from my head to my toes," Petty remembers in the book. "I mean, you can't imagine someone hitting a child like that.... I was fucking five!"

Much of *Petty: The Biography* focuses on the saga of the Heartbreakers – the bond between bandmates as well as the tensions. Most of the group members were also in Mudcrutch, Petty's early-Seventies band, back when he was a skinny blond nobody playing bass. Zanes had frank discussions with all of them – including former drummer Lynch, who opens up about his long-simmering difficulties with Petty.

Lynch was particularly irked about Petty's 1989 hit solo album, *Full Moon Fever*, which Petty recorded with minimal help from the Heartbreakers and a different drummer. But he has plenty of regrets about how he handled his final years with Petty. "I didn't need to be so big, so loud, so fucking noisy," Lynch says in the book. "If I could talk to that guy... I would've gone, 'Son, you're a fool. You just don't know it yet. So why don't you keep your fucking

"Petty opens up about the most painful chapters of his life, all the way back to his childhood."

mouth shut and just let a few things work around you."

That's not to say he's forgiven Petty, especially when it comes to the subject of former bassist Howie Epstein, who died of heroin-related complications in 2003. "I never forgave Tom for not being at his funeral," says Lynch. "I can't. I wish I could." Petty says he went to a separate, private memorial, and is deeply hurt over Lynch's insinuations that he didn't do enough to save Epstein's life. "I don't think Stan knows what we went through with Howie," says Petty. "Nobody does. I owe Howie more than to tell those tales. But I will say that I miss him all the time. I hear his voice on records, and it just kills me."

Petty managed to avoid Epstein's fate by going to rehab and kicking his heroin habit. The sweetest event of the past 15 years was Petty's surprising decision to reunite Mudcrutch in 2008, which Zanes takes as a sign of Petty's commitment to his magic. "You don't see Billy Joel re-forming the Hassles or Bruce Springsteen re-forming Steel Mill," Zanes writes. "Probably for very legitimate reasons. It was a career move that could stop a manager's heart.... [But] Petty didn't always think in terms of what made sense; it was all about the songs he thought 'might be back there.'" This revealing book gets inside that uncompromising spirit.

ANDY GREENE



Springsteen in
Asbury Park, 1979

ARCHIVES

BRUCE'S BIG 'RIVER' REISSUE

Springsteen's 1980 LP was a sprawling two-record set. A new reissue shows he left a lot in the tank

Three weeks after he released *The River*, Bruce Springsteen took the stage in Tempe, Arizona. It was November 5th, 1980, the day after Ronald Reagan was elected president, and Springsteen and the E Street Band tore through their set with extra ferocity. "I don't know what you guys think about what happened last night," Springsteen told the crowd before "Badlands". "I think it's pretty frightening. You guys are young, there's gonna be a lot of people depending on you coming up, so this is for you."

A pristine video of the show is one of the highlights of *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection*, a four-CD/three-DVD box set (due December 4th) of material from Springsteen's fifth album. As his onstage speech indicates, it was a time of growing social conscience. "It was a record where I first started to tackle men and women and families and marriage," Springsteen said in 2009. "I wanted to capture the themes that I'd been writing about... and at the same time add the music that made our live shows so much fun for our audience."

The *River* sessions produced Springsteen's first Top 10 single, "Hungry Heart", and way more material than

could fit on even a double album. Some of the outtakes found their way onto later compilations, but there was enough left behind to fill an entire disc that'll be revelatory to even hardcore fans. Previously unreleased song "Party Lights" features lyrics that later appeared in "Point Blank", "Atlantic City" and even the extra verse Springsteen tacked on to Tom Waits' "Jersey Girl".

Springsteen archivist Thom Zimny dug into the vaults and unearthed the Tempe show – and was shocked by what he saw. "The band has such raw energy," says Zimny. "The way it was shot really gives you an opportunity to take in the full stage and the look of the E Street Band at that time. Also, the sound is just amazing."

Zimny also shot *The Ties That Bind*, a new documentary about the making of *The River*. With Springsteen as its only interview subject, it's an intimate film shot on the grounds of his New Jersey home, where he plays acoustic renditions of *River* songs and talks about his creative process. "I wanted the viewer to feel like they were sitting in Bruce's backyard," says Zimny. Now that Zimny has created documentaries about *Born to Run*, *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *The River*, doesn't logic dictate that he'll tackle *Nebraska* next? "I would love that," he says. "I didn't know about *The River* until the day after *Darkness* came out and Bruce gave me a call, so let's keep our fingers crossed."

A.G.

PROFILE

King Gizzard's Wizardry

With the release of their seventh album, the prolific Melbourne outfit aren't done confounding expectations

NOT CONTENT TO CUT AN album of four loosely structured jams each coming in at exactly 10 minutes, 10 seconds long, King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard decided to make "another heavy concept record" for the follow-up to this year's *Quarters!*. And then, like a bad trip, things started to unravel. "It started destroying everyone's brains," recalls frontman Stu Mackenzie, laughing. Mackenzie is spending a relaxing afternoon in the band's new studio – a converted warehouse in the Melbourne suburb of East Brunswick – while simultaneously trying to mix a record by an act called Mangelwurz and looking after a friend's 12-week-old puppy.

"We were trying to make these song structure loops where everything was connected," he continues. "It was one long 45-minute song that evolved into different sections; I guess you could call them songs. We were making this thing and it was just like – so fucked... We were trying to intellectualise rock music, which was so ironically stupid. So we thought, 'Let's put that on hold for a while and do the opposite to clear out our brains.'"

The opposite involved driving up the coast to his parents' dilapidated farm in Winchelsea, Victoria, not far from where this seven-piece collective formed back in 2010. His parents weren't living there at the time, and the property had, to put it mildly, seen better days. There was one working tap and an empty shipping container in the adjoining paddock powered by a long extension cord running from the farmhouse. Mackenzie and his bandmates – Joe Walker, Eric Moore, Ambrose Kenny-Smith, Lucas Skinner, Cook Craig and Michael Cavanagh – thought it was the perfect place to craft the pastoral palette cleanser they had been dreaming up in their heads. If a single source of electric-

ity wasn't enough of an obstacle, they decided to limit themselves to acoustic instruments only. Mackenzie describes this conscious uncoupling from their electric instruments as liberating, especially after the one-two fuzz thrust of *I'm In Your Mind Fuzz* (2014) and *Quarters!*.

"It can be stereotypical and stifling when you're looking at the same bunch of pedals at your feet," explains Mackenzie. "And then you pick up an acoustic guitar and you're bound to a tone. It's liberating because you can write a song without

stick. What sounds like a ramshackle process resulted in arguably the most accomplished and song-focused King Gizzard record yet. With its whimsical cover art by longtime collaborator Jason Galea – featuring clay figurines of each band member and a water tank from a model train set – *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon* looks like some forgotten Sixties gem. And it sounds like it, too. "We wanted to make it look like something you'd find in an op-shop, in a \$2 bin; a weird, forgotten relic record," Mackenzie says.

Paper Mâché Dream Balloon is King Gizzard's seventh full-length album in five years, which is an incredible strike rate for a band with seven members to wrangle. What's more impressive is they've been able to maintain quality control even as they've shifted gears from psych rock to Spaghetti Westerns, and all sonic points in between. Mackenzie puts their prolificacy down to the unfussy manner in which they record as well as his personal addiction to the record making process. "I find it the most rewarding element of being a musician," he says, "that process of having a song idea and

slowly seeing it turn into a real thing like a record."

But King Gizzard's restlessness can confound at times. Back in late September they received an ARIA nomination for Best Jazz Album for *Quarters!*. A few weeks later and they were accepting an Independent Music Award for Best Hard Rock, Heavy or Punk Album for *I'm In Your Mind Fuzz*. Mackenzie says he likes keeping people on their toes. "I guess we are confusing. I'm cool with that. Let people be confused."

Following a \$50,000 grant, the band – all seven of them – were able to tour the U.S. in 2013. It's been a reciprocal love affair since. They recently returned to New York's Daptone Records studio to finish the nightmarish concept album they started before *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon*. It'll be the next release, Mackenzie promises. "We've recorded most of it now, but there's still a lot of work to do," he says, with just the slightest hint of trepidation in his voice.

DARREN LEVIN



"We were trying to intellectualise rock music, which was so ironically stupid," says Stu Mackenzie.

having to think about the way the guitar is going to sound."

And because unplugging your instruments and recording in a shipping container clearly isn't much of a challenge, they decided to learn three new instruments – clarinet, double bass and violin – from scratch.

"They were completely foreign to everyone," says Mackenzie. "I think I did all the clarinet breaks on this track called 'Sense' hundreds of times for it to sound good, because I really can't play that instrument."

What emerged from those sessions was *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon*, the first King Gizzard recording to be stitched together like a patchwork quilt. Even the drums were recorded piecemeal. When they couldn't find a kick pedal they improvised by wrapping a T-shirt around a



GUITAR HERO
Stu Mackenzie in full flight. "I guess we are confusing," he says. "I'm cool with that."

Scott Stapp's TV Therapy

After a series of disturbing incidents, the Creed frontman finds a fresh start – with the help of a reality show

By Andy Greene

LAST NOVEMBER, SCOTT STAPP called his son's school to report some shocking news: "I've uncovered that the core of ISIS is within my own family," he said in a voicemail. "Please call me immediately."

The call, which Stapp never explained, was one of the most disturbing incidents in a pattern of erratic and paranoid behaviour for the former Creed frontman – so troubling that his wife, Jaclyn, demanded he move out of the house they shared in southern Florida. Stapp spent about a month driving aimlessly around the country and posting unhinged videos to Facebook. In one, he ranted, "There are people who have taken advantage and stolen money from me, and they're trying to discredit me." In a phone call around the same time, he went on to suggest his life was in danger. Deeply concerned, Jaclyn called 911. "He thinks he's part of the CIA," she told the operator. "And he's supposed to assassinate Obama."

In the early 2000s, Creed's Christian-infused message and Stapp's shirtless-messiah charisma helped the band sell 50 million albums. But his drug and alcohol abuse led to its eventual breakup after 2009's *Full Circle*. Stapp, who suffers from bipolar disorder, was involuntarily placed in a psychiatric facility late last year. After treatment, including medication to control his disorder, Stapp was released, and not long after, he and Jaclyn were tentatively back together.

Stapp stayed largely quiet about his recovery until October, when VH1 began airing the sixth season of the reality series *Couples Therapy*, which features him and Jaclyn sharing a house with model Janice Dickinson, *Mob Wives*' Angela "Big Ang" Raiola, *RuPaul's Drag Race* contestant Carmen Carrera, New Jersey rapper Joe Budden and their partners.

For Stapp, the show is an opportunity to prove to the world that his breakdown – which he blames on an interaction between his antidepressants and an un prescribed medication – is be-



BORN AGAIN
Stapp in 1999 with
Creed, and (left)
this year.

hind him. He also wants to explain the Obama-assassination talk, which earned him a visit from the Secret Service.

"In my delusional state, I thought that Obama was in trouble and I was trying to save him," says Stapp, 42. "And it got all twisted and convoluted. It's really impossible to give a reasonable explanation for someone who is in a manic psychosis experiencing delusions and hallucinations."

On *Couples Therapy*, the Stapps clash with their housemates and try to re-establish their marital bonds, all while being filmed 24/7. At first, the Stapps were sceptical

"I thought that Obama was in trouble and I was trying to save him," relates Stapp.

that the show would actually help. "We were initially concerned about it being authentic therapy and not a scripted show," says Stapp, who taped throughout the spring and summer after his initial round of psychiatric care had ended. "After multiple conversations, they really convinced us it was real therapy."

Adjusting to life on the set of a reality show was difficult for the couple. "[The show's head counsellor] Dr. Jenn told us

it was part of the therapeutic process because it put us in a situation where we could keep no secrets and everything was exposed," says Stapp. "Even the conversations you would think were private, like in the bathroom or in bed at night, were subject to the doctor's scrutiny and analysis. It was a lot to endure."

Reality treatment shows have been criticised for exploiting emotionally and mentally vulnerable people; five former cast members of VH1's *Celebrity Rehab*, including country singer Mindy McReady and former Alice in Chains bassist Mike Starr, died shortly after appearing on the show. The Stapps are ready to take on the criticism they expect to face. "Scott's always had his critics," Jaclyn says. "Fifty per cent of people love him, and 50 per cent hate him. We have thick skin."

Stapp plans to launch a solo tour next year, and he hopes that Creed, who last played together in 2012, will re-form at some point. "I ran into the guys, totally unplanned, at the Hard Rock Hotel in Orlando a few months back," he says. "We ended up just hanging out by the pool for three hours, just catching up. I hope we get back to the studio at some point and make a record. Our 20th anniversary is coming up in 2017, so we'll see how it works out."

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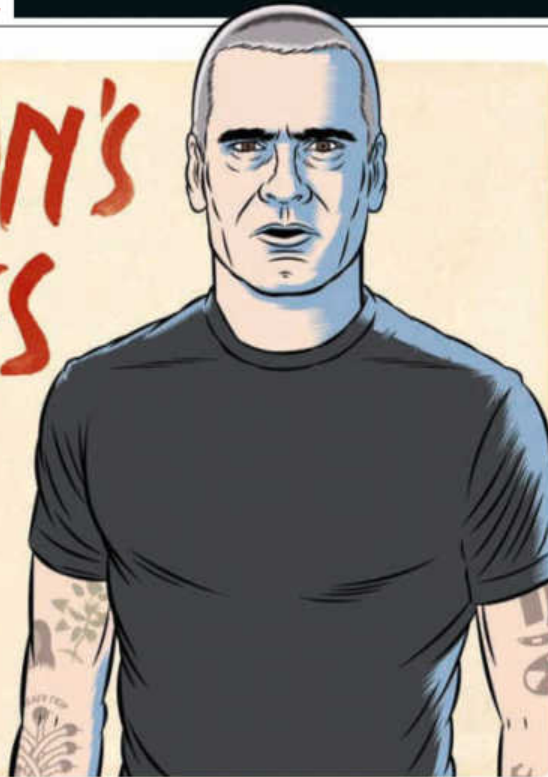


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A FAN'S NOTES

BY HENRY
ROLLINS

Our man in the
van considers
those punters
who'd throw a
deer's head at him



IBET THE NUMBER OF ONSTAGE performers who've never dealt with hecklers or audience agitation of some variety is close to, if not zero.

Heckling, at least my definition, is any human-generated action that keeps the performer from doing what he or she planned.

I am the veteran of literally thousands of shows and have been subjected to quite a bit of "feedback". I have had cigarettes put out on my legs, been hit with bottles, ashtrays, urine (Scotland), a deer's head (America), fists etc. Also, there is the verbal variety, which is quite prevalent in the world of comedy.

People are going to go where their opinions and pre-show intake direct them while the performer is onstage, so it's all up to how the heckled one deals with the heckler.

I have found it useful to employ a bit of in-the-moment jujitsu against the antagonising voice that springs forth from the darkness. I remind the person that he or she is surrounded by people who paid way too much money to walk into the room and listen to some guy onstage, and at this moment everyone in the place (not me, of course, because I'm such a swell guy who likes everyone) wants to club this person like a baby seal. I always use that line because there is nothing cuter than a baby seal, yet they do indeed get bludgeoned to death. The audience roars, the heckler chooses life, and on we go.

**"I've been hit
with bottles,
ashtrays, urine,
a deer's head."**

Many years ago, when I was toughing it out in the clubs, there was one really rough room I would do talking shows in in Philadelphia, one of America's harsher venues. There was a woman in the audience who yelled at me for almost the entire show every time. I never saw her but she became so regular, I could use her as a jumping off point to get into the next topic.

For the most part, I don't suffer this distraction too often. I think it might be in part that I am not trying to antagonise or shock an audience, nor am I trying to set up an adversarial relationship with them, which I know some performers thrive on. Not me. I have a great affection for my audience and lead with that.

Sometimes an interruptive sound from the audience isn't heckling, and if you know what you're hearing, you can tell. In Canada a few tours ago, I heard someone moving in their chair accompanied with a bellowing roar. I looked in the direction, pointed and said, "Seizure." I was right. The chairs were moved, the paramedics came. I sat onstage for the entire 45 minute period it took to deal with the situation and the show resumed. Once in Western Australia I heard a man going off during my show. I knew he wasn't trying to antagonise. I stopped and asked him if he had a condition. Tourettes, stimulated by alcohol. A live show always has an unpredictable factor. It's not a vocation for everyone. 🐘

Nile Rodgers

FIVE CRUCIAL
INSPIRATIONS

The guitarist and producer is hard at work on a new Chic album, which he calls "the most self-indulgent thing I've ever done" – but he took time to tell us about five songs that changed his life.

Elvis Presley

"Blue Suede Shoes"

My grandmother gave me a pair of blue suede shoes and told me, "Dance for the family!" I liked the song. I *loved* the shoes.

The Doors

"The End"

It starts out like a fugue, then the tempo goes out of control. I remember taking acid with Dr. Timothy Leary, and this song was all I kept hearing.

The Beatles

"A Day in the Life"

The song goes on a journey. The composition felt challenging and rewarding. I practiced it on guitar until it sounded perfect.

Jimi Hendrix

"Castles Made of Sand"

This is the first time I remember hearing backward guitar. I tried to play it: "Whoa, what the hell is that?"

Miles Davis

"Bitches Brew"

I know now that it was put together with edits, which is unbelievable. It's so seamless. They called it "new directions in jazz", but it was "new directions in everything".



Danzig's Skeletons in the Closet

The former Misfits frontman drops a covers LP and guests on one of TV's best shows

'SKELETONS' IS AN ALBUM OF cover songs that Glenn Danzig has talked about for years but only just got around to finishing. On it, the former Misfits frontman lends his evil croon to 10 tracks that inspired him as a songwriter – from the obvious (Elvis) to the unexpected (Aerosmith). ROLLING STONE spoke with him about the LP, and starring in an upcoming episode of *Portlandia*...

What's the biggest skeleton that comes out of the closet on 'Skeletons'?

People might be surprised to hear me do "Rough Boy" by ZZ Top or "Lord of the Thighs" by Aerosmith. It came down to stuff I thought I could do something cool with. With the Elvis track, "Let Yourself Go", I wanted to make it heavier, which is



the opposite approach to what I took on the Everly Brothers track ["Crying in the Rain"], which is sparser, creepier, more stripped-down.

Are you interested in educating listeners with some of these selections?

It'd be nice if people discover some of this older stuff. There's a whole world of musical history out there that people may not

be aware of that's there for the listening.

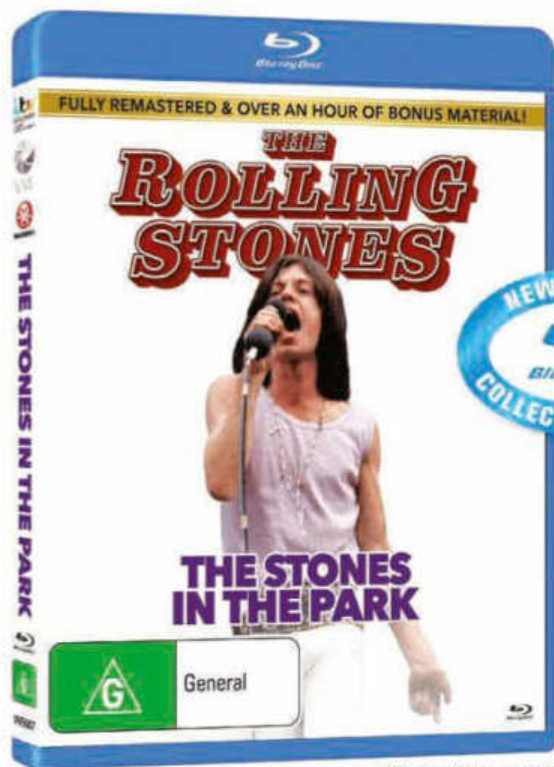
Is your voice still in good shape?

I think I've got a better range now than when I was younger. The best thing you can do if you're a singer is not smoke. I see singers smoking and I'm just like, "How do these guys even sing?" It's just gotta be destroying their lungs. So I don't smoke, I rarely drink, and I do a wind-down after the show – I take care of my throat.

You're on an upcoming episode of 'Portlandia'. What can you tell us?

It's pretty funny. I'd just gotten off tour and I had an e-mail from Fred [Armisen] and they were shooting the next day, they'd been trying to get in touch. The script was funny so I ended up saying, "Yeah, I'll do it." I play a kind of black-clad heavy metal character and I interact with Fred and Carrie [Brownstein]. I'm not really supposed to tell you about it but it's funny. **MATT REEKIE**

29



Also available on DVD



OVER 1 HOUR OF NEW BONUS FOOTAGE!

Filmed just two days after the tragic death of guitarist Brian Jones, some 250,000 fans flocked to Hyde Park, London, on a pilgrimage to see the group described as "the greatest rock'n'roll band in the world" The Rolling Stones. A free show, the band played their hits, including *Satisfaction*, *Honky Tonk Women*, *Jumping Jack Flash* and *Sympathy for the Devil*, and released thousands of butterflies into the air in a tribute to their former guitarist.

Winner of The Best News Documentary at the 1969 Rank News Film Awards, *The Stones in the Park* has been lovingly restored in High Definition and has had its soundtrack remixed in Dolby 5.1 (including the additional song *Mercy, Mercy*) this concert has never looked or sounded better. A fascinating documentary on the most successful band of their generation, captured at their most vulnerable, *The Stones in the Park* is a must for all fans of the legendary rockers.

FROM THE VAULT

Kurt Cobain's Deepest Cuts

New set unearths trove of intimate home recordings
By David Fricke

THERE IS THE REclusive young man laying down early acoustic versions of his songs into a cassette machine, the giddy adolescent making silly-voice radio ads for his new band, and the keen experimenter building sound collages and storms of guitar distortion. There is also the serious writer recounting an early suicide attempt with performance-artist resolve, the unabashed romantic cover-

RAW POWER

The *Montage of Heck* album uncovers never-before-heard Cobain songs.



ing the Beatles' "And I Love Her", and the besieged rock star singing about his anguish and insecurity from the edge of oblivion.

They are all Kurt Cobain. And they are all on one record: the soundtrack to *Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck*, writer-director Brett Morgen's HBO documentary about the late Nirvana singer-guitarist. Released by Universal last month in a variety of formats, including a 31-track deluxe edition, *Montage of Heck: The Home Recordings* is Cobain's first official solo album, curated by Morgen from more than 200 hours of private cassette tapes, including previously unissued songs, that Cobain made from the late Eighties until shortly before he took his life in April 1994 at age 27.

"There is nothing on the album that was previously released on any album or, as far as I know, in bootleg form," Morgen says. "Everything came from those cassettes, and we only included stuff that was Kurt's solo work, as opposed to band rehearsals." Morgen sequenced the set "to create a feeling that the listener was sitting in Kurt's apartment, bearing witness to his creation".

Morgen – who was originally approached in 2007 about doing a Cobain film by the singer's widow, Courtney Love – began listening to that wealth of tape when he finally started production in 2013, with Cobain's daughter, Frances Bean, as an executive producer. Cobain did not date his cassette recordings, says Morgen, "but we were able to ascertain for most of the tracks the year, sometimes within a few months, based on what else existed on the tape". That is literally true in some cases. The droning-ballad demo "Burn the Rain" ends abruptly when Cobain walks away to answer the phone, leaving his tape machine running – you can hear him take a message for his girlfriend at the time, Tracy Marander. A delicate solo-guitar instrumental, "Letters to Frances", is clearly a loving ode to Frances, born in 1992 and only 20 months old at her father's death.

For Morgen, the pivotal moment on *The Home Recordings* is the shock, almost halfway into the deluxe edition, of the spoken-word piece "Aberdeen". (It does not appear on the 13-cut "standard" soundtrack, which mostly contains music and demos of Nirvana songs.) In that track, featured in Morgen's documentary over newly created animation, Cobain describes his isolation and near-suicidal despair as a teenager in Ab-

erdeen, Washington, in the eerie, neutral voice of someone reading from a journal.

"He actually did several takes of it," Morgen says. "In the long form, you actually hear his edit points or him flipping over the papers.

"The joy in the first half of the album" is the creativity that "poured out of him", the director says of Cobain. "Nobody is telling him to go write a song. He's doing it and amusing himself." But "Aberdeen", Morgen contends, "deepens the context for everything that follows" – including the previously unissued song "She Only Lies", a har-



"We only included stuff that was Kurt's solo work as opposed to band rehearsals," says Morgen.

rowing vocal-and-bass-guitar portrait of the singer drowning in emotional betrayal.

Frances, now 23, had no part in compiling *The Home Recordings*. "I turned it in," Morgen says. "The next word I heard was 'It's approved.'" He likens the set's forensic nature to the way Bob Dylan's long-running *Bootleg Series* "further your understanding of Dylan's progress". And, Morgen claims, "there's a tremendous amount of joy. We never got to see Kurt smile that much in public." But on many of these recordings, especially the early ones, "You can imagine what he looked like, sitting in his apartment by himself, having a fuckin' blast," Morgen says. "You're hearing him smile."

KURT UNPLUGGED

Five highlights from 'Montage of Heck: The Home Recordings'

'The Happy Guitar'

A young, cheerful Cobain plays a jaunty folk-blues number on acoustic guitar like he's holding down the stage in a mid-Sixties Greenwich Village coffeehouse. When Morgen says you can hear Cobain smiling on the early tapes, this is what he means.

'Rehash'

Cobain revs up the distortion for a riff that suggests Black Sabbath in their prime and pushes his voice up to a manic, shredded falsetto. But there is a genuine song – clearly indebted to Cobain's Northwest-punk idols the Melvins – coming through the turbulence. At points, Cobain shouts "Solo!" and "Chorus!" where he plans to put more noise and ideas later.

'And I Love Her'

The grunge-rock avenger often cited as the John Lennon of his generation covers this Paul McCartney ballad – originally recorded by the Beatles in 1964 – with blatant, plaintive need. Says Morgen, "There was a lot more Paul in Kurt than he let on."

'She Only Lies'

This emotional seesaw between accusation and helplessness literally sounds like the depth of despair: Cobain picking a bony riff on bass guitar, singing as if he is already receding into the distance. "There is only one version," Morgen says. It is more than enough.

'Do Re Mi' medley

"There is no resurrection," Morgen says of his Cobain film – it ends with the singer's death. But *The Home Recordings* concludes with more hope: the breaking-light spell of "Do Re Mi", Cobain's last known song. An excerpt from his 1994 demo appeared on the 2004 box set *With the Lights Out*; Morgen includes the complete surviving performance. D.F.



The Long Walk From 'Charcoal Lane'

Archie Roach's debut album enlightened the country – 25 years on, there's no going back. By Michael Dwyer

OF ALL THE AWARDS ARCHIE Roach has won these past 25 years, there's one memory that still puts a swell in his chest. It goes back to March 1991, as the red carpet spilled its welcome down the stairs of the Darling Harbour Convention Centre for the fifth annual ARIA Awards.

"Our town car pulled up," Roach recalls, eyes closed tight and a smile playing on his lips. "Me and Ruby [Hunter] in there. And people can't see properly who was in the car. The screaming and cameras are going off."

So the door opens and out climb two Aboriginal people. He's a Gunditjmara man born at Framlingham Mission, near Warrnambool. She's Ngarrindjeri, from up on the Murray. Not that anyone is asking.

"We got out and stood on the red carpet and everything went quiet. Ah, OK," he nods once, knowingly. "It was a bit of a long walk. We had our heads down. Ruby's saying out of the corner of her mouth, 'Hurry up, don't look at anybody'."

He gives a hoarse, gleeful laugh and rubs his bald head.

"At the end of the night, *Charcoal Lane* got the Best

Indigenous Album and the Best New Talent," he says. "And bang, you know? People coming up with microphones and cameras and they all wanted to know who I was. It felt good. I felt proud. There you go. That's who I am."

It's slightly staggering to retrace the lay of the land back then. It's not like there were no Aboriginal artists on the ARIA radar. The previous two years' nominations had included Kev Carmody, Yothu Yindi, Scrap Metal, Coloured Stone and Gondwanaland. But the Best Indigenous honours had twice gone to [*Cont. on 34*]

A GOOD FEELING
Archie Roach, photographed in October. His debut LP is 25 years old.





ARCHIE ROACH

[Cont. from 33] colonial folk-rockers Weddings Parties Anything.

Yes. Really.

Aided by the profile and unobtrusive expertise of producers Paul Kelly and guitarist Steve Connolly, *Charcoal Lane* was simply too strong an album to be denied. Its devastating lead single, "Took the Children Away", addressed a stain on our history then barely known or acknowledged by the mainstream.

"I'd been writing mainly just country-type songs, you know, about drinking and relationships," Roach recalls of his previous 15 years as a singer round campfires and community shelters. It was his Uncle Banjo, a familial lifeline from his childhood, who gave him the fateful nudge. "Why don't you write a song about your life, when you were taken away from your family?"

Roach initially demurred. He had been, after all, only three at the time. "I don't remember anything about that really, it's very vague."

Uncle Banjo looked at him. "Yeah, well I do."

So the piercing details of that unimaginable day came to be sung. The mother's desperate tears. The father flying up from the creek in a rage. "You touch my kids and you fight me." All wrapped in the impossibly forgiving cloak of the greatest unheard voice of a generation. Most remarkable, then and still, is that what wells in its simple chords is only sadness, not anger.

"No," he says. "No. I think writing the songs and singing them had a lot to do with that. When I put down the songs... I just felt that way. I wanted to write a good song that hopefully a lot of people could listen to. Not try to scare them away."

"I remember when I was drinking I used to get pretty angry and I'd do some things that I'm not very proud of, take it out on people, or society. I wanted to take a different direction."

The drink blurred a turbulent decade after Roach fled the last of his foster families – "the Coxes, who I loved dearly," he stresses – at the age of 14. A letter from his lost sister revealing the passing of the mother he had barely known arrived at his high school one day, and "that sort of threw me," he says.

"About a week or so later, somebody turned up at the door and he announced himself as my social worker. I didn't know what was going on. So all through this, I just left. I just took off."

He found his soul mate and salvation, Ruby Hunter, and eventually the bond of dispossessed community they wrote about in "Down City Streets" and "Charcoal Lane" – the alley off Gertrude Street in Fitzroy, which is now a non-profit native tucker restaurant that trains Indigenous hospitality staff.

"We used to go to [Fitzroy community station] 3CR in Smith Street. A friend of mine did the programming and we'd set up and pre-record, tape these songs. People heard them, and people started to come to me with their own stories."

One of them turned into "Munjana", another homegrown human tragedy given

that but it's an important story that people should know about."

For younger artists like Sultan, "Archie was always there. He was a constant growing up and I looked up to him, admired him. I grew up listening to *Charcoal Lane*. It was an album that was in the house. And it was an album that was really important for the music industry in this country."

Sitting at his kitchen table in suburban Melbourne, "not gettin' around quite so spry" after his stroke and lung cancer operations of recent years, Roach shakes his head with palpable gratitude for the new interpretations of what remains, by any measure, a landmark set of songs.



BACK IN THE DAY

Roach recording *Charcoal Lane* with producers Paul Kelly (left) and Steve Connolly.

voice at last. Its subject, Nellie Moore, was a mother like Roach's own, lamenting a stolen son who was not as fortunate as he. Convicted of murder as a teenager in Florida, Russell Moore remains in prison there to this day.

Dan Sultan performs that song in duet with Emma Donovan on the 25th anniversary edition of *Charcoal Lane*. The bonus disc also includes new versions of album tracks by Paul Kelly, Courtney Barnett, Marlon Williams, Urthboy, Briggs, Gurrumul and more.

"Archie dropped in to the studio to tell us the story of 'Munjana,'" Sultan says. "He wanted to make sure Emma and I... were across the story; what the song meant and what it stood for. That was really cool to have him in there and speak for the song. It took a lot of energy to sing a song like

"Briggs has done 'The Children Came Back'. Brilliant. He's just rapping up all the heroes, you know? All the Aboriginal heroes... Urthboy and Radical Son and Trials have done this totally amazing version of 'No No No'. It's rapping and some singing in language. It's just amazing."

Looking back though the years, he doesn't shy from the bitter disappointment of the Howard era, during which so much momentum for reconciliation stalled after the promise of 'Building Bridges' and "Treaty". But watching the confident rise of artists like Sultan and Ellie Lovegrove and Nancy Bates, he knows he made that long walk for a good reason.

"The great thing about Dan, and others as well, is they don't need an agenda. They just write songs. Love songs. Whatever they feel. And that's good. They're able to do that because people like myself and people before me have already told these stories. We've done that. And that's a good feeling."

FIVE NOTES

Vintage Trouble

**CALIFORNIAN RHYTHM & BLUES QUARTET
MAKING FANS IN HIGH PLACES**

1 AC/DC LOVE THEM

Having already supported the Stones and the Who, Vintage Trouble launched their second album, *1 Hopeful Road*, by accepting AC/DC's invitation to open for them throughout Europe. "People ask us, 'Is it weird that you opened for such a heavy group?'" says vocalist Ty Taylor. "But they're a rhythm & blues band too, they just have a lot more amps than we do. Their music is rock & roll, but the basis of the blues is what they're playing."

2 SO DOES DON WAS

The legendary musician and producer signed the quartet to Blue Note Records and produced *1 Hopeful Road*. "To see him dropping his head behind the sound desk and start swinging back and forth [to our music] was better than most prizes," laughs Taylor. "He's not just the CEO of the label, he's fucking Don Was!"

3 HOPE IS WHERE THE HEART IS

1 Hopeful Road takes its name from a lyric in album opener "Run Like the River". "One of the things my mother told me when I was a kid is, it's [based on] a Bible passage: 'The race is not given to the swift or strong, but to the one who endures to the end.' Rather than it just being this whimsical sentence about hope, we wanted to give it a concrete address, so 1 Hopeful Road is a place where dreams keep living."

4 NO POINT RUSHING

2011 debut *The Bomb Shelter Sessions* was recorded in three days. The follow-up, which pairs Taylor's silkily soulful vocals with the band's authentic melange of soul, blues and rock & roll, took a whole two weeks. "That includes the mix," cackles Taylor. "We got the songs to a place where we were able to go into the studio and do less brain surgery and a little more letting go."

5 THEY'RE PLAYING BLUESFEST NEXT YEAR

Having visited Australia in 2012, Vintage Trouble are returning with their incendiary live show at Easter. "It's very rare that you can go to places that feel as wild as they are grounded, and that's what Australia reminds me of," says Taylor.

ROD YATES



TROUBLE MAKERS
Vintage Trouble
cut a dapper
figure. Ty Taylor,
second from left.

TRASH AESTHETIC
Grimes in NYC in
September



BREAKING

One-Woman Supernova

Grimes produces her own songs, headlines festivals and wants to be the new Trent Reznor. By Rachel Syme

WHEN CLAIRE BOUCHER, who writes, records and produces music as Grimes, decided to show off her unshaved armpits in a recent round of press photos, her PR team went into crisis mode. This was not the image they had in mind – they wanted her quirky but groomed, wild but not too wild, more feminine than feral. Boucher saw it another way.

“I was like, ‘Armpit hair! Yes!’” she says, sitting cross-legged on a couch in the Los

Angeles headquarters of her record label, 4AD. Boucher, 27, is wearing an oversize black T-shirt bearing the name of Ronda Rousey, and fresh white sneakers, with her long hair, magenta at the roots and brown below, twisted into two braids. She looks like Wednesday Addams headed to a rave. “Everyone else on my team was like, ‘No way, no armpit hair, absolutely not.’ So in the end we sent the shots to Big Jay.”

Big Jay is Jay Z, who signed Boucher to his Roc Nation management company. Jay quickly ruled in Boucher’s favour on the photos. “He just said, ‘Yes, let her keep the hair,’” Boucher says with a smirk. “He overruled everybody. It’s just good to have an artist at the head of the

management, because, like, he’s an artist. He gets us.”

Jay Z signed Grimes in 2013, shortly after her 2012 breakthrough, *Visions*, made her a rising star, critical darling and huge festival draw. Soon she was spinning legendary house parties in Ibiza, attending the Met Ball and appearing in fashion’s front row.

Buying into the Grimes project means buying into Boucher’s independence; she often calls herself “an auteur” without sarcasm or irony. Boucher made *Visions* entirely by herself in under a month, locked in a dark room with only GarageBand software, Adderall and whatever food friends thought to bring her. She made all the beats, sang

“It was a mindfuck,” says Boucher of her early online popularity.

all the vocals, played all the instruments and drew all the album artwork. Boucher says she made the album “at such a psychotic pace” to meet a deadline set by her then-manager. But even in that short span, she came up with something both defiantly weird – the big song off *Visions*, “Oblivion”, features an eerie, childlike voice trilling glossolalia over thumping beats you feel in your chest – and addictive, like a house party in an ice castle.

When Boucher talks, it’s like listening to the Internet out loud. She clicks open one conversational tab after another, and it’s your job to keep up. One moment she will be extolling the merits of Rousey (“She’s so psychologically intense!”); the next she will be giving hair-dye tips (“Get the Manic Panic kind, like the superbleach. Then use the purple toner”); the next she’ll veer into a sombre place, talking about how she got so depressed one night last year that she did tequila shots and decided to write a sunny pop hook in the wee hours to stave off the blues.

Boucher’s new album, *Art Angels*, is even more jubilantly all over the place than *Visions*. Some of it sounds like straight pop: “California”, the song that came out of that tequila-fuelled all-nighter, recalls, of all things, late-period Dixie Chicks (Boucher is a huge fan; she says that when she met Natalie Maines she “had a panic attack”). Some of it sounds like alien music of the future. “Flesh Without Blood”, which Boucher calls “a diss track” about a false friend, undulates in Doppler waves; she says she added so many beats that the song kept crashing her computer.

Raised in Vancouver, Boucher grew up loving drawing and ballet before moving to Montreal in 2006. While studying neuroscience, she began making noise rock on her computer, and after seeing the category “grime music” as one of the choices on MySpace, she adopted it as her stage name. Soon she was so enmeshed in becoming Grimes that she dropped out of college to make music full-time. “My dad still asks if I can finish my degree,” she jokes. “My parents understand what I do, but they still get mad when I swear on the Internet. They are like, ‘Your grandmother might see this!’”

Swearing on the Internet, ironically, is part of what made Grimes a phenomenon. She began speaking out on Twitter and her Tumblr about everything from

sexism in the music industry to loving pop music like Psy and Mariah Carey. Boucher’s posts made her a target – of those offended by an anti-sexism manifesto and those who thought she had sold out with *Visions*, among other critics. “It started getting hostile,” Boucher says of the heat she took online. “Going from being an unpopular, introverted person to dealing with all that, it was a mind-fuck.” She temporarily deleted her Tumblr and plotted her next move.

Boucher recorded a new batch of songs that never congealed, before moving from Canada to Los Angeles with her boyfriend,



Grimes and Jay Z at the Roc Nation pre-Grammys brunch, 2014

musician James Brooks of the band Default Genders, to finish *Art Angels*. Once again, Boucher recorded entirely alone (though she did mix the songs with Madonna and U2 producer Spike Stent). She’s glad she took her time: Unlike *Visions*, which “wasn’t really finished when we put it out”, *Art Angels* is an album she can stand to listen to without cringing.

Even as she cops to making pop songs for *Art Angels*, Boucher is adamant that she isn’t a pop artist. “Pop music is made by teams of people,” she says. “I make independent music. I think it’s important not to be artistically indebted to anybody if you want to stand for something. I want to be like Trent Reznor.”

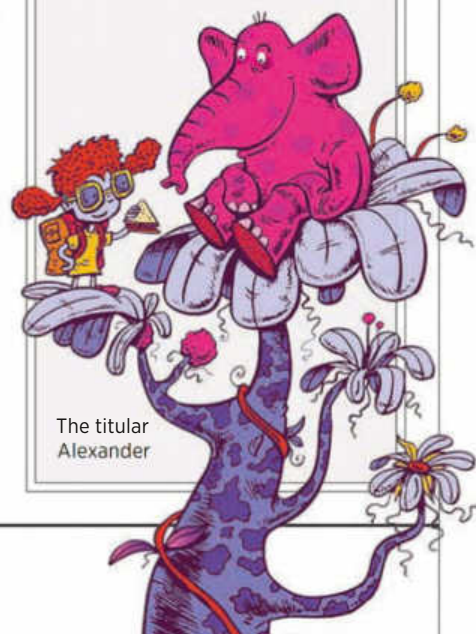
Recently, Boucher launched a “collective” called Eerie Organization to put out the work of fellow female musicians. In an industry where women represent a mere five per cent of all producers, Boucher’s commitment to producing her own music isn’t just essential to her sound, it’s a political act. And it is also what may make her a new kind of icon. “When I was a teenager, there weren’t women I could relate to,” she says. “It was really hard for me to visualise this career, because it didn’t exist.”

WILD BOOK

PAT DAVERN: DOING IT FOR THE KIDS

Grinspoon guitarist pens kids’ book and LP, with the help of famous friends

Talk about worlds colliding: the day after launching his latest project, a children’s book and album called *Alexander the Elephant in Zanzibar*, Grinspoon’s Pat Davern jetted off to Townsville to start touring in support of Cold Chisel. “It wasn’t supposed to happen like this,” he laughs of the conflicting schedules. Davern first got the idea for *Alexander the Elephant* from stories his father would tell the guitarist’s daughter. He decided to write an album based around the Alexander character, to which artists such as Megan Washington, Alex Lloyd and Fergus Linacre and Alex Laska of Kingswood have lent their voices. That, he says, was the easy part. “Building the narrative and getting the story right took a long time,” he explains. “I knew the way I wanted the story to go, but it definitely ebbed and flowed, while the songs stayed pretty much the same the [whole way through].” Illustrated by award winning Martin Chatterton, the book (and record) follows Alexander as he tries to defeat the loggers threatening the great tree in the forest of Zanzibar. “It’s all about, being different’s OK, and finding courage when you need to,” says Davern. **ROD YATES**



The titular Alexander

'Mr. Show' Makes a Return

The best sketch-comedy series of the Nineties returns for a brilliant new run By Tim Grierson

IN THE MID-NINETIES, when Bob Odenkirk and David Cross got the green light from HBO to create their own sketch-comedy series, they were unknown comics who had both written for the short-lived *Ben Stiller Show*.

W/Bob & David

All four episodes are available on Netflix now

But the late-night cable oddity they created – *Mr. Show With Bob and David*, which ran on HBO from 1995 to 1998 – became an alt-comedy cult classic. “*Mr. Show* meant everything to us,” says Odenkirk. “It seemed to be my chance to do something really pure, as funny as I could do it, with as much freedom as I could ever hope to get in this business.”

Mr. Show’s anarchic energy, surrealist pacing and highbrow irony were to the indie-rock Nineties what *Saturday Night Live* had been to the Seventies. Sketches could riff on anything from the Founding Fathers to the homoerotic undercurrents in heavy metal; one classic was a *Boogie Nights* parody about a porn magazine called *Taint*. “That show seemed aimed directly at us,” says Tim Heidecker of *Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!*, “almost as if Bob and Dave had infiltrated our brains.”



SECOND HELPING
Odenkirk (left) and Cross in *W/Bob & David*

In the early '00s, *Mr. Show* alums like Sarah Silverman and Jack Black became superstars, and Cross found success with a recurring role on *Arrested Development*. For a while, it seemed as if Odenkirk’s career as a performer might’ve stalled. Recently, though, he’s had an amazing run, appearing in *Breaking Bad* and *Fargo*, and now starring in *Better Call Saul*. Throughout all this, Odenkirk and Cross had often considered getting back together for another run. “We talked about it for years,” says Odenkirk, who is currently filming *Better Call Saul*’s second season, in Albuquerque. “The issue is always our schedules – they just never match

up. Finally, we had this window of time.”

Two years ago, the pair did a brief live tour. Now they’re reuniting for real with their new Netflix series, *W/Bob & David*. Due to their busy careers, the pair were able to create only four shows for the first run of *W/Bob & David* (plus a behind-the-scenes special). But the old *Mr. Show* spirit is there: One sketch is about a guy who gets magical powers every time he says “cunt”; another is about a white director doing a “revisionist” remake of *Roots*. When *Mr. Show* debuted, it often had an acerbic outsider energy. This time around, their show has a looser, more playful feel. “We don’t

have to make our own mark,” insists Cross. “I mean, we made our mark – and now we’re kind of having fun.”

Back in the Nineties, no one was doing anything like *Mr. Show*. After two decades of programs like *Community* and *The Daily Show* that owe a lot to Odenkirk and Cross’ self-aware aesthetic (*Community* creator Dan Harmon is an avowed *Mr. Show* superfan), they’re returning to a comedy landscape they helped create. “I think *Key & Peele* is the closest thing to what we do,” says Odenkirk, adding, “I don’t care about what we did 17 years ago. I care about what we are trying to say now to people now about the world now.”

Essential Bob and David

Absurdity, visual gags and heavy-metal jokes: YouTube these classic ‘Mr. Show’ sketches

‘Drugachusetts’

A fantastical *H.R. Pufnstuf*-style kids show is the setting for a succession of drug freakouts. Moral for young viewers: “Always know your dealer.”



‘Titannica’

Cross jumps into a vat of acid after listening to his fave metal band but lives to meet his heroes. “I played your song ‘Try Suicide’ right before I tried suicide!” he gushes.

‘Civil War Re-enactments’

A Ken Burns-style doc about Civil War re-enactors who are forced to battle Trekkies and Renaissance Faire attendees who show up at the same field.

‘Pre-Taped Call-In Show’

Cross hosts a talk show “where we tape all our calls a week in advance”, and becomes an increasingly frazzled prisoner to that deranged premise.

‘Marilyn Monster’

A shock rocker tapes a training video for Marilyn Mozzarella’s Pizzarella Pie Parlor. Perhaps the best parody of 1990s alt-culture ever.

Last Minute Gifts

Now we're not saying that you haven't already gotten a gift for your loved-ones, but if you haven't, here's our pick of the crop

▼ Uppercut Deluxe Men's Grooming Product \$74.99

Uppercut Deluxe makes strong holding product for real men



◀ Heineken Lager

Who can resist a frosty can on Christmas day? And Heineken cans even come in Christmas colours (may just be a coincidence).



◀ Steen Jones Skateboard \$99.99

'Sail Away With Me' is a limited edition skateboard by Brisbane based artist, Steen Jones, known for his work at the Rolling Stone Live lodge.



▲ Apple Thief Cider Cans \$13.99 (4 pack)

Apple Thief's Pink Lady cider won an Australian Cider Award, and now it comes in a can. Perfect for summer!



▲ Jack Daniel's Tennessee Honey \$44.99

Like your bourbon a little sweeter? Try this smooth variation on classic Jack.



◀ Brokers Dry Gin \$49.99

There's nothing quite as British as a good G&T, and Brokers is so British it comes with its own bowler hat lid!



◀ Stolichnaya Salted Karamel \$36.99

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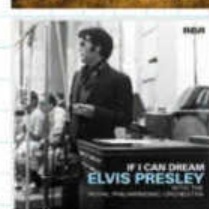
▲ Authority Clothing \$49

Authority Clothing have a bunch of new designs including this awesome collaboration with street artist Kentaro Yoshida.



▼ Records For Dad

Christmas CD releases for Dad are usually thin on the ground, but this year there's a bonanza of titles that should keep Dad fighting for control of the stereo.



VIVA LA VIDA
Martin onstage
in Central Park
in September

NEW ALBUM

Chris Martin Gets His Groove Back

Coldplay team with Beyoncé hitmakers for 'hippie' LP

A FEW YEARS AGO, CHRIS Martin was feeling “depressed and overwhelmed”. He was in the final stages of his 10-year marriage to Gwyneth Paltrow, and he felt increasingly insecure about the music he was making. “I wasn’t looking at things in a healthy way,” he says.

Then a friend gave him some books, including *Man’s Search for Meaning*, a memoir by psychiatrist

and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, and a volume by the 13th-century Persian poet Rumi. Martin says one poem, "The Guest House" – which suggests "inviting in" dark thoughts – helped him get through the period around his divorce. "It kind of changed my life," he says. "It says that everything that happens to you is OK. The idea is to accept what happens to you and not run away from anything – and trust that things will blossom and become colourful."

Martin features the poem in a psychedelic spoken-word section of Coldplay's seventh album, *A Head Full of Dreams* (out December 4th), which is all about his road back from anxiety and heartbreak. "It's all true," Martin says. "It's about love and acceptance and embracing what happens to you. It's quite a hippie album. All of our records were a journey to get to this one."

Martin says that Coldplay's last album, 2014's spare *Ghost Stories*, was a "smaller record" – deliberately. "It frees you up to do whatever you want next – just look at Bruce Springsteen's career." Instead of touring behind *Ghost Stories*, the band stayed in the studio. "I was being sent so many songs from the universe that I said, 'I've got to just keep recording,'" says Martin.

This time, Coldplay ratcheted up the ambition. They started work with Stargate, the Norwegian producers behind hits by

Beyoncé and Rihanna. Nothing was off the table. "We wanted to marry all the music that we love, from Drake to Oasis," says Martin. "There was a feeling that we don't have anything to lose. We're very comfortable now with the fact that we're not for everybody."



LIFE IN TECHNICOLOUR Coldplay shoot a music video in India in September.

The producers were demanding. They required demos for every song ("We felt unsigned again," says Martin), and the members had to unanimously agree on which songs to record. "For every song that made it, eight or nine didn't," Martin says.

Coldplay were encouraged to recruit outsiders; Noel Gallagher plays guitar on

"Up & Up", and Beyoncé guests on two tracks, including the club stomper "Hymn for the Weekend". (Blue Ivy even gets a backing-vocal credit.) But the most surprising guest of all was Paltrow, who sings backup on the farewell ballad "Everglow". "We just did it in the studio one day," Martin says after a long pause. "It was just a friendly kind of thing."

Martin's favourite moment on the album sounds the least like Coldplay: "X Marks the Spot", where he spits rhymes through a vocoder over drum loops. "Most of the instruments on that song didn't exist when we made our first album," Martin says. "People who want us to be a rock band might be disappointed, but I don't think we really are a rock band."

Last year, Martin sent fans into a panic when he suggested Coldplay's next album would be their last. "I have no idea what's going to happen," he says now. "If one day we make another record, then that's wonderful." Then he clarifies: "We're definitely not splitting up."

Next year the band will take their show around the world. "I think it will feature some jazz fusion for six or seven hours," Martin jokes. "I don't know if it's going to be wildly different from what you might imagine – [it will be] all our best songs with some awesome production. If you're a Coldplay fan, you'll love it. And if you don't like us? Don't worry about it. It's OK."

PATRICK DOYLE

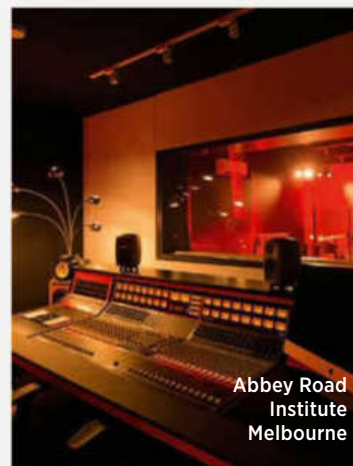
ABBEY ROAD ARRIVES DOWN UNDER

The famed Abbey Road Institute sets up shop in Melbourne

Abbey Road is without a doubt the world's most famous and revered recording studio. Responsible for some of the biggest albums ever recorded in the UK, and home to some of the most inventive audio engineers over its long history, Abbey Road has also put its considerable weight behind a number of

schools in countries such as France, Germany and the UK, imparting the combined wisdom of the studio via its Abbey Road Institutes. After successfully setting up shop in Melbourne's Southbank, Abbey Road is already undertaking student admissions, and recently announced that its Sydney home will be none other than iconic recording complex Studio 301 in Alexandria. 301 will continue to cater to recording artists whilst

running a full-time Music Production and Sound Engineering course with Abbey Road. The two state-of-the-art institutes will no-doubt only add to the ranks of Australian producers who are making waves overseas, as well as giving local industry professionals the chance to share their knowledge with the next generation of Aussie producers, engineers and mixers. The Sydney Abbey Road Institute is expected to open in July 2016. **MATT COYTE**



Abbey Road Institute Melbourne

MY SOUNDTRACK

Tim Rogers

The You Am I frontman is a dancer, a romancer, and remains hopelessly in love with loud guitars By Rod Yates

The Song I Fell In Love To

Hall & Oates "I Can't Go For That", 1981



"I've been drinking at my wife's restaurant for years, and the night I asked her out, which was only a few years ago, she nodded 'yes', and then we got a lock-in at the restaurant, dancing to Hall & Oates songs. And then we noticed staff leaving and we were the only two left there. Hall & Oates is still a code for something I can't tell you about."

The Song That Makes Me Cry

Randy Newman "Losing You", 2008



"I brought it to my dad when he was having triple bypass surgery, and he also had bowel cancer, and I listened to that with him when he was very frail. It's from a record [*Harps and Angels*] about mortality and dying, but it's humorous as well, and I wanted him to be filled with that."

The Song I Want Played At My Funeral

The Rolling Stones "Jumpin' Jack Flash", 1968



"It will remind anyone who turns up that this auditorily sums up the reason I'm around. At my funeral [there'll be] a great bar around the corner, Rusty [Hopkinson, You Am I drummer] will be DJing, Andy [Kent, bass] will be the barman, and you'll probably go home and sleep with Davey [Lane, guitar]."

The Song That Reminds Me Of Touring

Billy Miranda "Go Ahead", 1960



"Rusty and I were sharing a hotel room in London in about '97, and we got this record called *Black Rock & Roll Volume 1*, and it had little known rock & roll songs from the Fifties by African-American artists, and this

song [was on it]. It's a break-up song, and it's berserk. Russ and I were open jawed, we couldn't believe this fucking song. We initiated Davey to it last year, we realised we hadn't played him the song. Same thing happened to him, his jaw dropped."

The First Song I Learned To Play

The Rolling Stones "The Last Time", 1965



"I'd bought a gut-string acoustic, and as soon as I learned to play this song a friend invited me to a jam the following week at his house in Adelaide. I thought great, I want to be in a rock band, but realised that's all I knew, three chords. If Bono says all you need is three chords and the truth, I think you need four-and-a-half chords and a lot of lies. 'Cause I said, 'Yeah I'll play guitar, I can play "The Last Time"', and we played that for three hours."

The Song People Wouldn't Expect Me To Like

Scissor Sisters "I Don't Feel Like Dancin'", 2006



"My daughter and I used to dance for 15 minutes before bedtime to Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Marvin Gaye and Scissor Sisters. The last time they toured I was having a drink down near the Harbour and the guitarist walked past and I had to stop him and say, 'I adore your fucking band.' And he sat down and said, 'What do you do, you look like you're a musician', and I had to say, 'I've got nothing more to say, I just want to express how happy you make me feel.'"

The Song That Cheers Me Up

Violent Soho "In the Aisle", 2013



"I was walking over the Brooklyn Bridge last month and listening to the whole record [*Hungry Ghost*], and I wanted to jump off the bridge I was that happy. I can't think of a more exciting record I've heard in my

life. Any time I get down about, being in a rock band's going to kill me, I can listen to that record and be like, no, being in a rock band is what made me."

The Song I'm Most Proud Of

Tim Rogers "Part Time Dads", 2012



"The protagonist in it starts off with a bit of a whinge about the difficulties of break-ups and kids and wanting to maintain a wonderful relationship with your daughter when you're a part-time dad. But then why I'm proud of it, by the end, the protagonist – who isn't me at all [smirks] – realises that you are my only joy, and so I'm going to just get on with it, make dinner and let's do homework together and stop whingeing. Maybe 20 years ago if I'd been in that situation I wouldn't have had that denouement, so I'm quite proud of that."

The Song I Play Air Guitar To

The Replacements "I.O.U.", 1987



"I saw the film clip for 'Bas-tards Of Young' on *Rage*, and thought that's the greatest thing I've ever heard. So I went to Collect Records in Parramatta and mistakenly bought three Residents records [laughs]. They weren't what I was expecting. We played with the Replacements two months ago, and when they played 'I.O.U.' Davey and I were doing the whole Status Quo air guitar thing."

The Song I Listen To When Hungover

Noël Coward "Let's Say Goodbye", 1932



"I listen to Noël Coward almost exclusively when I'm hungover. I think, 'Come on, Rogers, stop feeling sorry for yourself, you did it to yourself.' So I put on my smoking jacket and say, 'Remember how lucky you are. Sure you may be hungover but you're not on the poverty line, so be grateful.' I do that by listening to Noël Coward records and wearing a smoking jacket."



“

If Bono says
all you need
is three
chords and
the truth,
I say you
need four-
and-a-half
chords and
a lot of lies.”



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THE FUTURE IS NOW

We profile 10 of the hottest artists who are climbing the charts, breaking the Internet or just dominating our office stereotypes...

JAALA

SOUNDS LIKE: Björk and Amy Winehouse duelling over a jazzy, indie art-rock fuzz

FOR FANS OF: Hiatus Kaiyote, St Vincent, The Sea and Cake

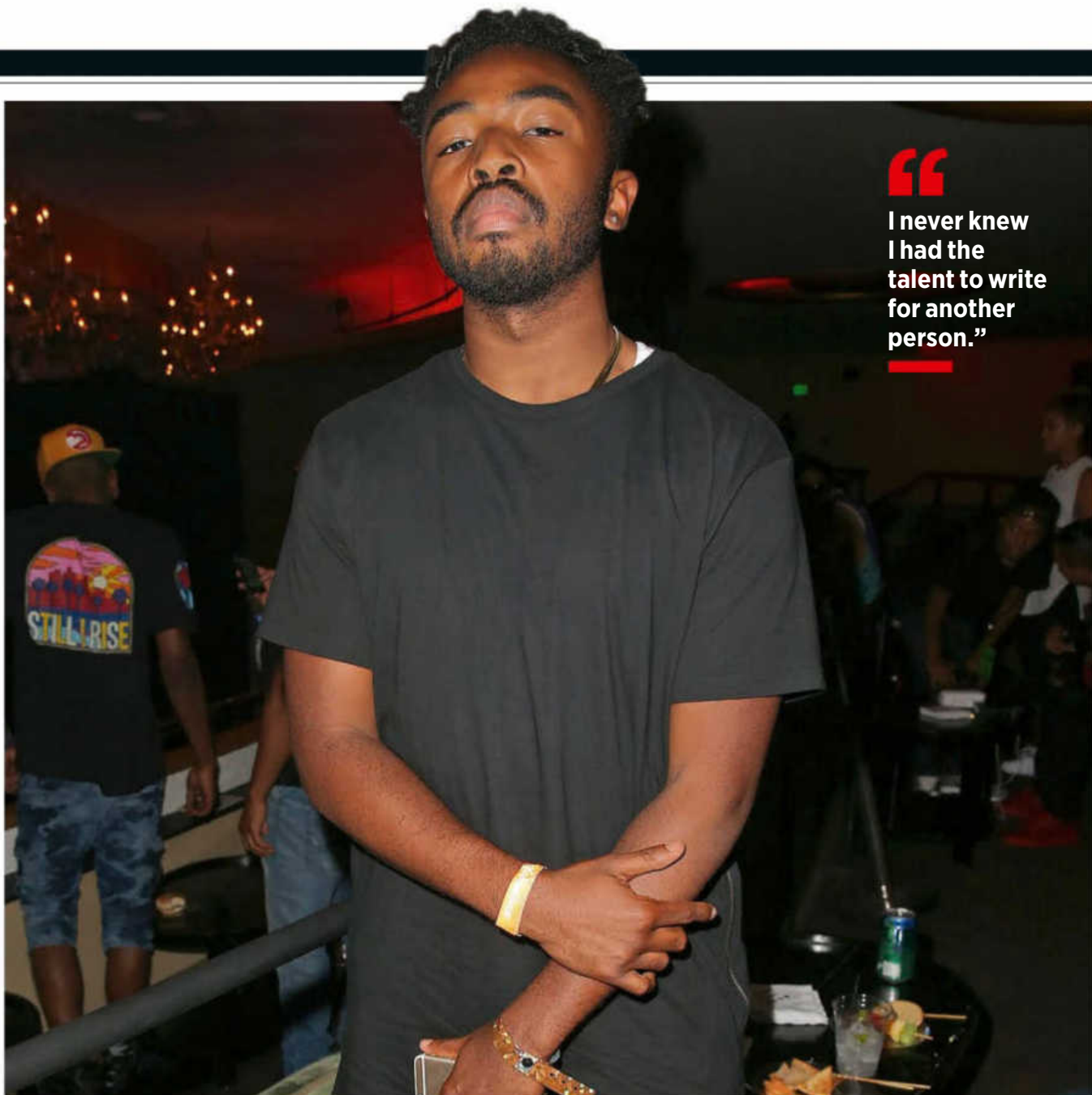
WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Jaala garnered some serious buzz at Bigsound earlier this year, have been pinged by some major press outlets overseas (the notoriously picky Pitchfork gave them a nod), and have already cut their teeth with a back-breaking tour with Hiatus Kaiyote ("We had only done five or so shows before that," says singer Cosima Jaala, "it was actually terrifying"). Now the four-piece Melbourne outfit – led by the dynamic and swooping vocals of main songwriter Jaala – have just released debut LP *Hard Hold*, a constantly beguiling record that takes in everything from scruffy blues to indie rock to spun out jazz. Recorded in a cramped seven days with Paul Bender from Hiatus, the tracks bounce and thrum – it was recorded so quickly, Jaala says, in order to capture the frenetic energy of their live shows.

THEY SAY: "It's a break-up record," says Jaala of *Hard Hold*'s origins. It's most poignantly described on album closer "Hymn". "It sums up the desperate sort of devotion that you have to a love. When you do everything for them." She pauses and laughs: "It's kind of perverse."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The lo-fi blues of "Salt Shaker", or the jangly, schizoid "Hard Hold".

JULES LEFEVRE





“

I never knew
I had the
talent to write
for another
person.”

KING MEZ

SOUNDS LIKE: Coast-free hip-hop with thickly tangled flows and tempos that switch seamlessly

FOR FANS OF: Kendrick Lamar, Chance the Rapper, Eminem

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: With three scene-stealing tracks on Dr. Dre's highly anticipated *Compton*, King Mez, the 25-year-old MC from Raleigh, North Carolina, appeared seemingly out of nowhere. Born Morris W. Ricks II, Mez has no famous cousins or viral Internet buzz, but has been quietly making waves for two years. Big Pooh from Little Brother connected him with Aftermath A&R Tyhiem Cannon during a

trip to Cali and, days later, Mez found himself in the middle of a large group of older and more experienced writers. His skills promptly earned him studio time with Dr. Dre, a consulting gig on the *Compton* project and, ultimately, rhyming alongside both Kendrick Lamar and Snoop Dogg on the Number Two album in America. Not bad for someone's first time out. "I was just talking to my brother about that the other day," he says, "and I don't even know how to put those feelings into words."

HE SAYS: "I think it will take some time for me to understand the magnitude of what that means," Mez says about being on *Compton*. "It's like a dream right now . . . I never knew that I had the talent to write for another person, but that was

my way in and it also helped me evolve as an artist. I went from solely focusing on my own perspective to imagining that I was Dre and trying to figure out what he would say. [The project was] 11 months of almost working every day, man. I tell you, I learned so much." Mez shows up on *Compton*'s "Darkside/Gone" with a verse that begins "I ain't never been a gangsta". Says Mez, "They say, 'You so talented, you could've been made a hit if you rapped about fuckin' bitches and gettin' money. You would've been platinum!' So I can be viewed as an oddball to some for being myself—but they are really the weirdos to me."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: King Mez blew through an amazing freestyle on Dr. Dre's Beats One Radio show.

D WATKINS



JESS GLYNNE

SOUNDS LIKE: Turning heartbreak into hope with a club's pulsing lights guiding the way

FOR FANS OF: CeCe Peniston, Amy Winehouse, Lisa Stansfield

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Last year, Jess Glynne's alto was all over pop radio thanks to her cameo on "Rather Be", the feather-light Clean Bandit hit that wound up nabbing the Best Dance Recording Grammy earlier this year. Glynne's voice stood out among her chart compatriots for its blend of ebullience and vulnerability: Even in the brief space of a pop song, her vocal performance showed she could run the emotional gamut. Her debut, *I Cry When I Laugh*, which came out in September, takes cues from quite a few subgenres of dance music, from saucy house to slick electro, but her voice, which brings to mind big-lunged divas of yore, can channel longing and optimism on the same song.

SHE SAYS: "I was going through a pretty hard break-up, but at the same time I was starting to live my dreams of working on my debut album. So I tried to pour all of that energy into my music and stayed focused on the positive. In the studio, I would write about hope, joy and happiness as a way to release everything that felt wrong in my heart. [*I Cry When I Laugh*] is essentially my own self-help guide!"

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Glynne's voice soars on "Don't Be So Hard on Yourself", a banger that wrings dancefloor joy out of heartache.

MAURA JOHNSTON

METHYL ETHEL

SOUNDS LIKE: A lone glam-rock astronaut floating deep into the outer reaches of his own mind

FOR FANS OF: T. Rex, Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd, Tame Impala

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: The latest act from Australia to make waves in the Northern Hemisphere is this trio from Perth – a noteworthy success story at this year's CMJ festival despite having zero U.S. label backing. They're already getting even bigger cosigns at home, where Melbourne's own Courtney Barnett is taking them out as an opening act in January of 2016. Frontman Jake Webb spent a solitary summer recording their debut album, *Oh Inhuman Spectacle*, almost entirely on his own in a

house a couple of hours south of Perth in a remote coastal town. "I find it difficult to work on things when there's anyone in earshot," he says. "If I'm as isolated as possible, I can go completely crazy and work on things until they evolve."

THEY SAY: Webb met Thom Stewart and Chris Wright, who round out Methyl Ethel's live line-up, through Perth's thriving rock scene. "It's a real tight-knit community," says Stewart. Their friendship with local stars Tame Impala came in handy earlier this year, when Methyl Ethel played a show at the club where Wright usually works as a sound mixer. "I didn't think to book anyone [to cover for me] that night, so we were stuck for a sound guy,"



"If I'm as isolated as possible I can go completely crazy."

Wright says. "We paid [Tame Impala leader Kevin Parker] 50 bucks to come and mix us. It was his first time mixing –

he was a little nervous, I think!" "He did a good job, though," Webb adds with a laugh.

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Twilight Driving": a melancholy lament with the unforgettable line, "Twilight driving/Got to watch out for the 'roos."

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

PATRICK JAMES

SOUNDS LIKE: Honey-voiced, old-soul folk music that sounds both expansive and intimate, ambling and immediate

FOR FANS OF: James Bay, Hozier, Stu Larsen

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Australian drama series *Wonderland* was short-lived, but 24-year-old Patrick James, who nailed a slowed-down, searching cover of the Church's "Under the Milky Way" for the show's soundtrack last year, looks set for a brighter future. Originally from Port Macquarie, the Sydney-based singer-songwriter, guitarist and pianist has already released three EPs, nabbed support slots with Boy & Bear and the Paper Kites, and in October released his self-produced debut LP, *Outlier*. The title was inspired by the book he was reading at the time, Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*. Gladwell's theory that success in any given endeavour requires 10,000 hours of practice resonated with James, who had spent weeks holed up in Sydney's Alberts studio self-producing the record. Just like Beck and Rod Stewart, James started his career as a busker, something that still informs the way he plays live today.

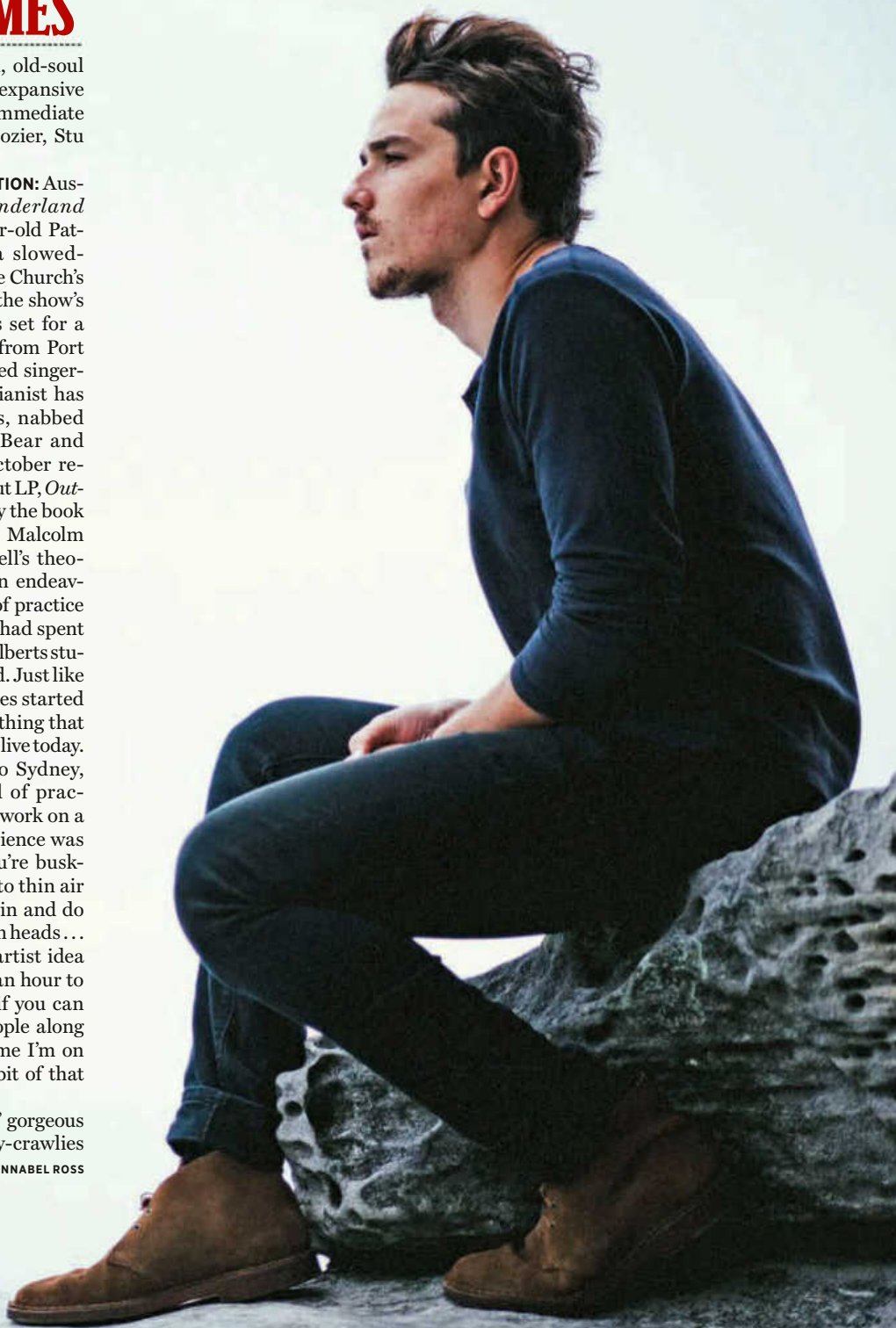
HE SAYS: "When I moved to Sydney, busking became this kind of practice platform where I could work on a new song and see if the audience was getting involved. When you're busking you're basically playing to thin air and you have to get people in and do something semi-good to turn heads... there's the classic support artist idea that you're playing for half an hour to support the main act, but if you can turn heads you can get people along to your solo show. Every time I'm on stage I think I summon a bit of that busking spirit."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: James' gorgeous lilt on "Bugs" makes creepy-crawlies sound oddly soothing.

ANNABEL ROSS

“

When you're busking you're playing to thin air.”





CITIZEN KAY

SOUNDS LIKE: Amped-up Aussie hip-hop that Trojan-horses in thoughtful, intelligent lyrics via party-starting live funk jams

FOR FANS OF: Thundamentals, REMI, Dialectrix

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Twenty-one-year-old Citizen Kay (real name: Kojo Ansah) and his family moved from Ghana to Canberra when the rapper, producer and multi-instrumentalist was five, the music bug biting him at 12 thanks to a Red Hot Chili Peppers live CD. Ansah's dad bought him a guitar and he was soon playing and singing in bands; when his voice broke he transitioned to rhyming. Currently splitting his time between his recording and mixing business and playing live (former tour partners include Public Enemy and Run the Jewels), Ansah's anticipated debut LP, *With the People*, has arrived hot on the

heels of his ARIA-nominated 2014 mini-album *Democracy*.

HE SAYS: "Every song had to be something that I could have a deep conversation about. One of the songs that people usually don't pick up on is 'Life Gives You Lemons' – people hear it as a party song but it's actually about growing up as a black kid in Canberra, being a minority but at the same time being influenced by the Australian culture of not being bothered by things.

"I was copping racism but I was in denial."

Even though I was copping racism I was in denial and I'd laugh it off. The lyrics represent the battle that was going on inside of me, whereas the music represents my outside personality, where people just saw me as this fun dude, even though in my mind I was self-conscious about who I was. So the way we've done it is the lyrics are the internal and the music is the external – a lot of the songs on the album have a similar concept."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Live instruments and smart raps coalescing on debut LP *With the People*.

JAMES JENNINGS

SHOPPING

SOUNDS LIKE: A certain ratio of post-punk distilled down to the fundamentals: wiry guitars, emphatic rhythms and incisive lyrics

FOR FANS OF: The Slits, Slant 6, consumerist critiques you can dance to

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: The London band have just finished their first tour of the U.S., including dates with Shannon and the Clams in October and Priests in November. Guitarist Rachel Aggs, drummer Andrew Milk and bassist Billy Easter first played together in the group Covergirl. They opted for a more "streamlined and scaled-back" approach, according to Milk, when forming Shopping in 2012. They're already on to their second album, *Why Choose*, out now on FatCat.

THEY SAY: "We're political people, but we didn't set out to make a political band," says Easter. "I think it comes through cathartically," says Aggs.



HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Straight Lines" neatly summarises the band's strengths: taut work from the rhythm section, an accelerated melody on guitar, and interesting vocal interplay as Milk examines the economic and emotional dynamics of a relationship.

TOBIAS CARROLL

MURA MASA

SOUNDS LIKE: Millennial R&B and neo-classical minimalism meeting in a trap track

FOR FANS OF: Jamie xx, James Blake, FKA Twigs

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Taking his moniker from a 16th century Japanese swordsmith, the productions of 19-year-old Brit producer Alex Crossan are razor-sharp, with startling juxtapositions of elegant strings, honeyed R&B vocals and snapping trap drums. While he's working on his debut album, Mura Masa's individual tracks are taking off: "Lovesick Fuck"

is at 1.3 million YouTube views while "Love for That" featuring Shura racked up more than 400,000 plays on his SoundCloud page in only a few weeks. And back in April, five of Mura Masa's tracks were prominently featured on a Diplo & Friends mix for BBC Radio 1.

HESAYS: Crossan claims that Gorillaz' "Feel Good Inc." video so inspired him as a lad that he learned guitar just so he could play along. But he also credits his musician father for some crucial lessons beyond turning him onto Joni Mitchell and Yes. "He gave me the best advice about how to be a mindful musician," Crossan said. "He told me that music is so much more about what

you aren't playing than what you are; silence and space are so important."

And while present-day Crossan relishes his recent collaborations with upstart singers like Shura and Nao, he's currently finding inspiration in something more personal. "I recently went through my first really terrifying break-up, and I can't express how powerful that is," he says. "It's not something to be shy of or try and avoid; catharsis is so healthy. I feel like a lot of really seminal records come from being deeply upset."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The minimal snap of "Love for That" is led by an assured mix of strings, woodwind and thumb piano.

ANDY BETA





GOLD CLASS

SOUNDS LIKE: Dave Gahan singing over an annoyed Fugazi covering the Smiths.

FOR FANS OF: Gang of Four, Savages, Karate, Life Without Buildings, Interpol

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Gold Class only formed in 2014, after friends from a creative-writing course pooled with workmates at a Melbourne bar, but already their knack for lean, explosive live shows is being thoroughly celebrated. Such energy is captured on *It's You*, their tensely melodic debut LP, which expertly carves a fresh path through post-punk; thanks largely to frontman Adam Cur-

ley's baritone and bare examinations of relationships and identity. Already selling out shows locally, they've toured with the Fall, have shows with Thurston Moore and a slot at Golden Plains lined up, and are eyeing off a 2016 trip to the U.S. to support the North American release of *It's You*.

THEY SAY: "It was more of a creative writing project at first," says Curley of their inception. "An outlet for being a bit more performative. My favourite places to play were the small rooms, but now we've started playing bigger stages it's exciting that you can have the same impact." A frontman who identifies as queer and a feminist, Cur-

ley is also interested in exploring personal politics. "I was starting a band with four male members in an incredibly masculine environment. At the time I felt like it was important to identify myself as queer and a feminist. I wasn't saying the album is a feminist statement, I wanted to say it incorporates feminist politics and that felt important to say. But it's inevitable – on a stage I'm going to embody all the things that I am and stand for."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The excellent, declarative churn of "Bite Down", Curley booming, "If your heart isn't in it/make it taste good."

MARCUS TEAGUE

JUDITH HILL

SOUNDS LIKE: A sexy R&B journey through space

FOR FANS OF: Prince, Darlene Love, CeeLo Green

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Judith Hill has had an action-packed career, but her time in the spotlight has only just begun. She's already appeared on *The Voice* in America and in the backing vocalist documentary *20 Feet From Stardom* – but it's the cosigns from Michael Jackson and Prince that take her several steps ahead of the game. “Michael re-

ally opened my eyes to what it takes to truly be an artist,” Hill recalls about her career beginnings as the King of Pop's duet partner from the would-be comeback tour he was mounting before his tragic death. More recently, Prince took Hill under his wing, having her record her debut album, *Back in Time*, at Paisley Park. “It's funny because he told me he had never seen me in [Michael Jackson documentary] *This Is It* or *The Voice*,” she says. “He had just stumbled across me in an interview I had done where I stated that I'd love to work with Prince.”

SHE SAYS: “Paisley Park is a really fun place to be. [Prince] is very fun to be around, he likes to play jokes a lot, like sometimes he'll call me on the phone to get me to come down for rehearsal or recording and he'd pretend to be someone else, and I wouldn't recognise his voice. He is a really fun spirit. We would be playing ping pong in between takes or things like that. I definitely treasure my time spent there.”

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: On the modern bluesy single “Cry, Cry, Cry,” Hill shows off her immense vocal range in full.

BRITTANY SPANOS





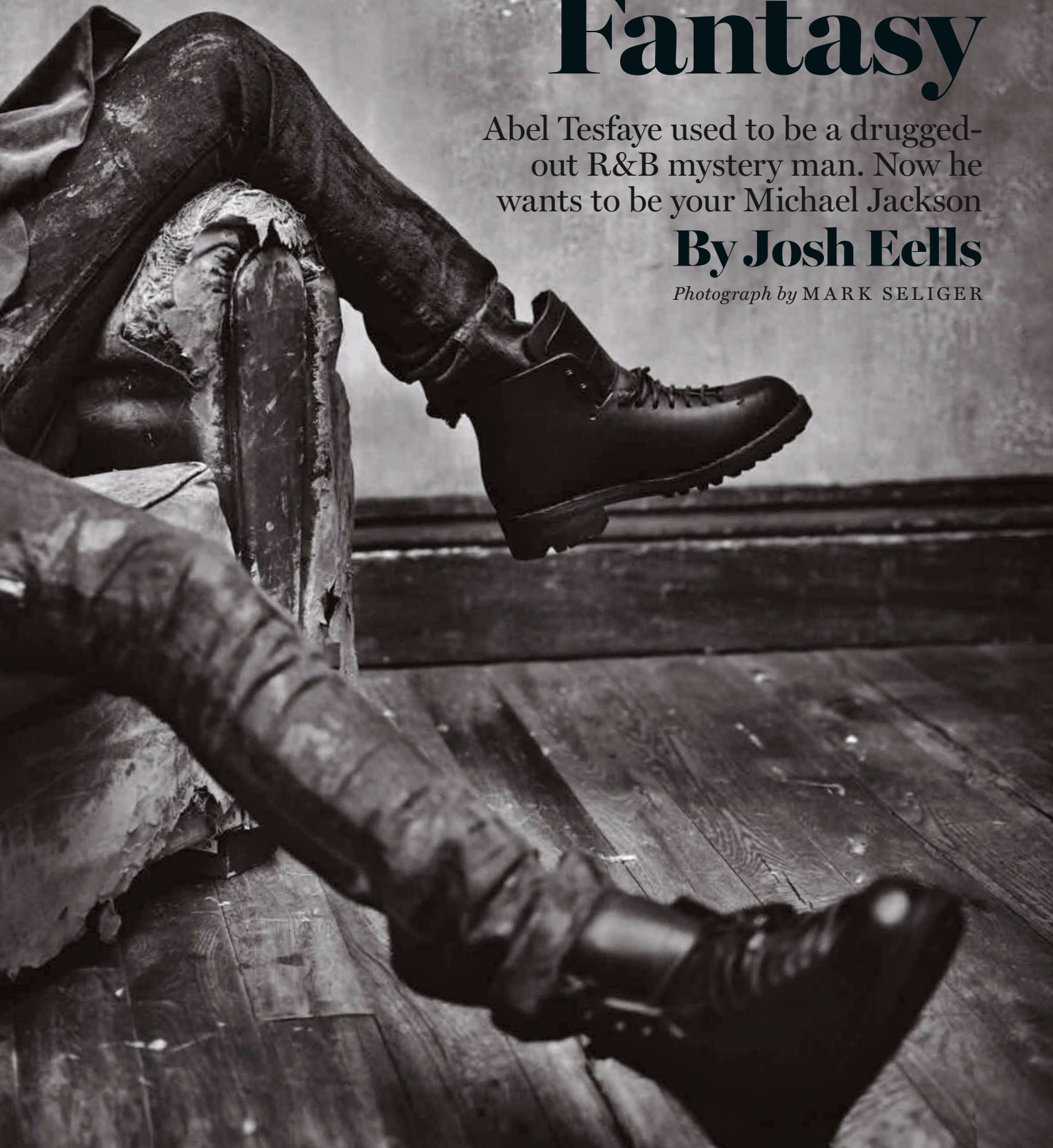
WICKED GAMES
Tfaye in New
York in October

The Weeknd's Dark Twisted Fantasy

Abel Tesfaye used to be a drugged-out R&B mystery man. Now he wants to be your Michael Jackson

By Josh Eells

Photograph by MARK SELIGER



S

O IS THIS SWEARING or no swearing?" In a darkened soundstage on the outskirts of London, Abel Tesfaye is wondering if he can say "fuck" or not. Tesfaye, better known as breakout pop sensation the Weeknd, is at a rehearsal for *Later... With Jools Holland*, the BBC music show, about to sound-check his smash hit "The Hills", a four-minute horror-movie booty call featuring more than a dozen f-bombs. For Tesfaye, that's relatively clean, but he knows the pensioners in Twickenham might disagree. So when the verdict comes back "no swearing", he nods and smoothly pivots to a censored version – a small gesture that says a lot about the kind of professional he has become.

"The Hills" is currently enjoying its fourth straight week at Number One, a feat made even more impressive because it took the place of another Weeknd track, "Can't Feel My Face" – Spotify's official song of the American summer, and the only song about cocaine ever to be lip-synced by Tom Cruise on network TV. Tesfaye is just the 12th artist in history to score back-to-back Number Ones, a group that includes Elvis Presley, the Beatles and Taylor Swift. His new album, *Beauty Behind the Madness*, has sold more than half a million copies in a couple of months, and he launched a U.S. arena tour in November. "I'm still digesting it, to be honest with you," Tesfaye says of his success. "But the screams keep getting louder, dude."

Tesfaye comes over to say hi, dressed in black Levi's and a Roots hoodie, his tsunami of hair piled high atop his head. "Sorry, I'm sick," he says, as his handshake becomes a fist bump in midair. Since starting this promo tour a week ago, he's been to Las Vegas, Paris, Berlin and now London. The cold caught up with him yesterday, during a signing for 500 squealing fans at the Oxford Circus HMV. (Overheard: "I wanted to hug him!" "You didn't hug him? I kissed him!")

This scene would not have seemed possible in 2011, when the Weeknd appeared

with a trio of cult-favourite mixtapes that established both his sonic template – drug-drenched, indie-rock-sampling, sex-dungeon R&B – and his mysterious, brooding persona. A press-shy Ethiopian kid from Toronto who has given only a handful of interviews, he has cultivated a near-mythical image as a bed-hopping, pill-popping, chart-topping cipher. "We live in an era when everything is so excessive, I think it's refreshing for everybody to be like, 'Who the fuck is this guy?'" Tesfaye says. "I think that's why my career is going to be so long: Because I haven't given people everything."

Spend just five minutes with him, though, and he reveals himself: sweet, soft-spoken, surprisingly earnest. When I tell him he's not what I expected, he nods. "When people meet me, they say that I'm really kind – contrary to a lot of my music."

When talking about his art and his career, Tesfaye is blessed with a towering self-confidence and has no hesitation about declaring his own greatness. "People tell me I'm changing the culture," he says. "I already can't turn on the radio. I think I'm gonna drop one more album, one more powerful body of work, then take a little break – go to Tokyo or Ethiopia or some shit." Hearing him boast about talking shop with Bono, or name-dropping "Naomi Campbell, who's a good friend of mine now", you may be tempted to see a diva in the making; or you may see a 25-year-old guy who's stoked and incredulous to be in the position he's in.

After rehearsal, Tesfaye is in the greenroom with his two managers, 31-year-old Amir "Cash" Esmailian and 35-year-old Tony Sal. Cash is a first-generation Iranian-Canadian sweetheart who occasionally yells things into the phone like, "You may as well bend me over a table, bro!"; Sal is a courtly charmer who grew up in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war and now dates a former Miss USA. Right now, they're trying to figure out how to get from Norway, where Tesfaye will be for promo in a few days, to Texas, where he has a show. According to their tour manager, the only commercial flight from Oslo to Austin is at 8 a.m.

"What about noncommercial?" asks Cash. The tour manager says he'll check, but they're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Cash looks around and grins: "The label's paying for it, right?"

I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER today. I feel amazing right now."

The next afternoon, Tesfaye is in a seventh-floor suite at his Soho hotel, having spent most of the previous 18 hours in bed. (There was also a B12 shot involved.) When a bellman brings in a silver tray with a selection of waters, Tesfaye pours himself a glass. "I just started being fancy, to be honest," he says. "Like, I just started learning how to pronounce what I'm wearing." He imitates a snooty shopgirl: "It's not Bal-mane, it's Bal-mahn." "Oh, sorry!"

When he first started recording as the Weeknd, Tesfaye was an unlikely star. "I was everything an R&B singer wasn't," he says. "I wasn't in shape. I wasn't a pretty boy. I was awkward as fuck. I didn't like the way I looked in pictures – when I saw myself on a digital camera, I was like, 'Eesh.'" Instead of his face, his album art and videos featured black-and-white photos of artful nudes – a topless girl in a bathtub, a woman's ass in a party dress. The aesthetic was American Apparel-style hipster catnip, right down to the Helvetica font.

Early Weeknd songs were atmospheric and chilly, their thick narcotic haze sliced by his broken-glass falsetto. The lyrics were an addiction counselor's worst nightmare: pills, pain, shame, serotonin, danger. He and his crew posted three songs on YouTube and started spamming their friends on Facebook, then watched the play counts slowly climb. "I don't know how many it actually was, but it felt like a million," Tesfaye says. "Five hundred plays? Holy shit!" Toronto being a small town in some ways, the songs were heard by Drake's manager, Oliver El-

Khatib, who posted them to the OVO blog, where they promptly blew up. "Apparently, Drake wasn't even fucking with it at first," Tesfaye says today. "Oliver was the one vouching for me."

The then-anonymous Tesfaye declined all interviews. In part, it was because he worried he wasn't well-spoken enough: A high school dropout, he used to do crossword puzzles to improve his vocabulary, and to this day, he often wishes he were more articulate. "Me not finishing school

"I was everything an R&B singer wasn't," he says. "I wasn't in shape, or a pretty boy. When I saw myself on a camera, I was like, 'Eesh.'"

Contributing editor JOSH EELLS wrote about David Letterman in RS 764.



WEEKND WARRIOR (1) With his girlfriend, model Bella Hadid. **(2)** With early supporter Drake, who featured Tesfaye on his double-platinum 2011 album, *Take Care*. **(3)** With Bulleez N Nerdz partner Jesse Ray in Toronto, 2009.

– in my head, I still have this insecurity when I’m talking to someone educated,” he says. “I don’t want them looking at me like this fucking retard – no disrespect.” For months, no one even knew if the Weeknd was a person or a group. That’s when Tesfaye realised he “could run with the whole enigmatic thing”, he says now. “If it backfired, I probably *would* have been doing interviews. But people were kind of liking me being a fucking weirdo.”

The three free mixtapes that followed – *House of Balloons*, *Thursday* and *Echoes of Silence* (all later repackaged and sold as *Trilogy*) – made him a darling of indie circles, and Tesfaye isn’t shy about praising them. “I probably could have toured off *Trilogy* for the rest of my life,” he says. “It definitely changed the culture. No one can do a trilogy again without thanking the Weeknd. A lot of artists started doing things faster and quicker after that: Justin

Timberlake dropped two albums in a year, Beyoncé dropped a surprise album.” He’s equally proud of the music itself: “I’m not gonna say any names, but just listen to the radio. Every song is *House of Balloons* 2.0.”

Drake gave Tesfaye a big boost when he featured the Weeknd on his double-platinum 2011 album, *Take Care*. But for Tesfaye, being under the wing of his fellow Torontonians was a mixed blessing: A handful of songs he’d written for *House of Balloons* ended up on *Take Care*. As Tesfaye said in a 2013 interview, “I was hungry... I was like, ‘Dude, take anything.’” Today, he says he has nothing but gratitude for Drake, whom he calls “my closest friend in the industry at that time”. Still, he says, “I gave up almost half of my album. It’s hard. I will always be thankful – if it wasn’t for the light he shined on me, who knows where I’d be. And everything happens for a reason.” That said: “You never know what I would say if this success wasn’t in front of me now.”

It wasn’t long before the major labels came calling. But even then, few would have pegged Tesfaye for the global superstar he is now – least of all him. “Never in a million years,” he says. “At the time, I thought I’d be a punk star – grow my hair out, acne on my face, super-fucking-skinny. I was looking at artists like Iggy Pop

and the Ramones, or Afro-punk. But you evolve and realise your potential. And then it’s like, ‘*Fuck yeah*. Let’s go.’”

AND NOW, A FEW WORDS about the hair:

The Weeknd’s hair is by far his most recognisable trait. There are Tumblrs and website listicles devoted to it; when I told the immigration agent at Heathrow what I was doing in the U.K., he said, “That’s the geezer with all the hair, innit?”

Tesfaye’s hair can be divided into roughly four sectors, each with its own distinct personality (front left: flopped-over moose antler; back left: tiny octopus). The overall effect is that of a rare double mullet: party in the front, party in the back. There’s not much to maintaining it, he says – just a hard shampoo every once in a while. But there are other annoying parts. “Sleeping. I wake up with neck pains sometimes. And not being able to hide myself.”

Tesfaye says the hair was partly inspired by Jean-Michel Basquiat. He began growing it out four years ago: “I want to be remembered as iconic and different,” he says. “So I was like, ‘Fuck it – I’m gonna let my hair just be what it wants.’ I’ll probably cut it if it starts interfering with my sight. I can kind of see it right now. But if I cut it, I’d look like everyone else. And that’s just so boring to me.”

Tesfaye’s hair also prompted one of his most WTF celebrity encounters. He was at a party for Sam Smith after this year’s Grammys, at an \$80 million mansion in Bel-Air. Katy Perry and Ed Sheeran were there; Disclosure were DJ’ing. “Everyone was hammered,” Tesfaye says. “Sam had just won, like, every Grammy, so he was having the time of his life. Max Martin actually left because everyone was so drunk. Unfortunately, that was the one month I decided to stop drinking. Everybody was having a great time, all these cool things were happening, and I was shaking, like – ‘Fuck, I really want a drink.’”

That’s when he met Taylor Swift. “She actually schooled me on my own shit,” Tesfaye says. “She was like, ‘I’ve been listening to ‘The Morning’ [from *House of Balloons*] for years – it’s one of my favourite songs ever!’ I mean, she might have just Googled it. But she seemed genuine.”

Tesfaye says Swift went on for about 15 minutes. “But the whole time she was talking,” he says, “she was kind of, like, petting my hair? I think she was just drawn to it – she must have been a little gone off a few drinks. And of course I’m not going to be like, ‘Hey, can you stop?’ I mean, it felt good! But when she started petting my hair, that’s when I was like, ‘I definitely need a drink.’”

ANYONE WHO’S HEARD THE Weeknd sing or seen his stage moves knows the debt he owes to Michael Jackson. He often says it was Jackson’s music that made him want to be a singer, and the lyrics to “Dirty Diana” that made him want to write songs. But Jackson was even more important to his family than to most, because of their East African roots. “People forget – ‘We Are the World’ is for Ethiopia,” he says. “At home, if it wasn’t Ethiopian music, it was Michael. He was our icon.”

Tesfaye’s mother, Samra, emigrated from Ethiopia in the 1980s and settled with her mother in Scarborough, a drab neighbourhood on the east side of Toronto. She juggled several jobs – nurse, catering, plus night school – and when she was home, she’d baby her only child. “I’m a mama’s boy,” Tesfaye admits. “Everything good, I get from my mother.” He was a quiet kid, and a little lonely sometimes. “I always wanted a brother so I’d have somebody to play with,” he says. “I remember lying to people that I had brothers – that’s how much I wanted one.”

Tesfaye’s mother and grandmother lived through Ethiopia’s so-called Red Terror, after Emperor Haile Selassie’s death, during which tens of thousands of civilians were killed by a military junta. But they never talked about it, and Tesfaye doesn’t know much of the history. “I actually wish Bono was here to school us both on it,” he jokes. “He knows more about Africa than any African I’ve ever met. I remember hearing some stories from my uncles – they would chew *chat* and talk. But I don’t think my mum wanted to tell those stories. I don’t think Ethiopians want their kids to feel like Ethiopia is a bad place.”

Because his mother worked so much, his grandmother took care of him a lot, taking him to services at their Ethiopian Orthodox church. (“It’s almost Islamic.

There’s a lot of bowing.”) His first language was Amharic, not English, and he says his high-flying vocal style was influenced by *habesha* singers like Aster Aweke. He still loves Ethiopian food: “It’s the best, man. But it’s very fattening. I think I’m still burning off that fat, to be honest. For an Ethiopian mother, if you have a chubby kid, it means you’re doing something good.” Tesfaye recently bought his mother a “huge house” in Toronto. “I think me getting my diploma would make her much happier, though.”

Tesfaye doesn’t know much about his father beyond his name: Makkonen, also Tesfaye’s middle name. The elder Tesfaye took off when Abel was one or two: “I saw him vaguely when I was six, and then again when I was 11 or 12, and he had a new family and kids. I don’t even know where he lived – I’d see him for, like, a night. I’m sure he’s a great guy. I never judged him. He wasn’t abusive, he wasn’t an alcoholic, he wasn’t an asshole. He just wasn’t there.”

Tesfaye was an up-and-down student. Until eighth grade, he was in French-immersion class, which meant he had to speak French all day. (“It sucked. At recess, all the regular kids made fun of us – they called us ‘Frenchies.’”) His mother sent him to piano lessons for a while, but he preferred pop music. He grew up in a golden age of R&B when Aaliyah, Missy Elliott, Timbaland and the Nephewettes were all over BET. “The late Nineties really formed my style – that sexy downtempo vibe,” he says. Later he got into rap – especially 50 Cent, whose debut came out when Tesfaye was 11 – and in middle school, he started smoking weed, so soon Hendrix and Led Zeppelin were in

the mix. “I was the kid wearing the Pink Floyd shirt and listening to Ginuwine in my ear,” he says.

When he was 17, Tesfaye says, he got kicked out of his school for “some incident” that he can’t remember. He had to transfer to a rougher school across town, away from all his friends. “Imagine starting all over at Grade 11? Fuck that – *peace*.” He lasted six months before dropping out and leaving home, and he and two friends moved into a one-bedroom house at 65 Spencer Avenue, in an up-and-coming Toronto neighbourhood called Parkdale. “It was amazing,” Tesfaye says. “No parents, we can do what we want, stay up as late

as we want – like, literally for days.” Two blocks away was a strip of hip bars and clubs. “We kind of put that part of the city on,” Tesfaye says. “We were legends on that street. If you go there now, it’s all these little 18-year-old kids that look like me.”

(Tesfaye says 65 Spencer inspired the title *House of Balloons*. “We’d throw these shitty parties and have girls over, and we’d try to make it celebratory, so we’d have balloons,” he says. Another possible explanation: The Victorian house, with its white columns and gabled roof, looks a lot like the house of balloons from Pixar’s *Up*, which came out around that time.)

Tesfaye had long wanted to be a musician, and he started pursuing it in earnest. He formed a hip-hop duo called Bulleez N Nerdz, rapping under the name Kin Kane. (Abel = kin to Cain.) Later, he joined a local production team called the Noise and wrote songs he imagined being performed by Justin Timberlake, Drake and Chris Brown. He also started partying a lot. “I never needed detox or anything,” he says. “But I was addicted in the sense of ‘Fuck, I don’t want to spend this day without getting high.’” For a while he was homeless and couch-surfing; he didn’t talk to his mum for a year. “Like, ’08 to 2010 – those are my hazy years,” Tesfaye says. “I have this lyric that goes, ‘I’m not scared of the fall/I’ve felt the ground before.’ And in this industry, I’m not really scared of failing, because I already know what it means to be on the ground.”

ONE NIGHT, TESFAYE IS joined in London by his girlfriend, Bella Hadid, the 18-year-old runway model and *Real Housewives* daughter. (She’s also an Olympic hopeful who is training to qualify for the 2016 Games in three equestrian events, which is apparently news to Tesfaye. “I read that!” he says. “I hope she does. I’ve never seen her do it, but word on the street is she’s bangin’ at it.”)

Hadid (whose older sister is budding supermodel Gigi) just arrived from Milan Fashion Week, where she walked in four shows. Now she’s hanging backstage with the crew, waiting for Tesfaye to get back, smoking cigarettes and eating chicken wings in a tight red dress. One of the guys asks what she’s up to. “I go to Paris tomorrow,” she says. “I can’t wait.” Tesfaye just bought her a puppy for her upcoming 19th birthday – a little black Yorkie named Hendrix. “But I’m probably going to end up taking care of it,” he says.

Tesfaye and Hadid have been dating since last April. “I actually asked her to be on the artwork for *Beauty Behind the Madness*,” Tesfaye says. “My motive was literally to work with her.” But when she

“People forget – ‘We Are the World’ is for Ethiopia,” says Tesfaye about his Michael Jackson obsession. “He was our icon.”

declined, “I was like, ‘All right, cool – we can meet up face-to-face.’” Tesfaye says he loves how hardworking she is, and how close she is with her family. “It just kind of fell into my lap,” he says. “If this had happened two years ago – well,” he catches himself, “she couldn’t.” (Two years ago, Hadid would have been 16.) “But if I’d met someone two years ago, I probably would’ve fucked it up. But I’m more – how do I say it? – clear-thinking now.”

In his music, Tesfaye has presented a conflicted, frequently cold view of women and relationships. On Drake’s “Crew Love,” he brushes off a girl who dares to distract him from his art (“Take your nose off my keyboard/What you bothering me for?”). On “Often,” he brags about turning a woman’s erogenous zone into a meteorological phenomenon.

Tesfaye says the sex in his music is mostly autobiographical. “I mean, no girl has ever actually rained,” he says. “But if that’s not what you mean, then yeah. I don’t want to sound like that guy where sex is not an obstacle. But I’ve had a lot of sex.”

Tesfaye lost his virginity when he was 16. A friend in college took him to a toga party, and he told a girl he was a student at nearby York University. “I could have been a student at fuckin’ McDonald’s, she was so drunk,” he says. “I was drunk too. It was the worst experience of my life. Losing your virginity to an older woman sounds good, but it was kinda like, ‘Oh shit, it’s done?’” In general, he says, he “wasn’t a ladies’ man – it was nothing like it is now”. He quotes the rapper Mike Jones: “The line ‘Back then, ho’s didn’t want me/Now I’m hot, ho’s all on me’ is definitely relevant.”

Part of the allure of the Weeknd’s music is its emotional chilliness – the way he creates a world that sounds both sexy and numbed-out. Next to his darkest songs, an R. Kelly track can seem almost wistfully romantic. The debauchery can have a creepy undercurrent: Tesfaye’s songs, especially the early ones, occasionally depict troubling situations, like on 2011’s “High for This”, where he sings about getting a girl wasted before having sex with her. “Everything is consent,” Tesfaye insists. “The tone is dark, the environment



EARNED IT At Coachella, in Indio, California, earlier this year. “I can make a girl [dance] with a beat,” he says. “It’s very easy. But pop music, that shit’s hard.”

is the dark. But there’s not force in it. They want to have a good time. Everybody wants to be there. Whether they regret their choices *after* is whatever. But everybody is in consent.”

There’s a more disturbing dynamic at work on 2011’s “Initiation”, where Tesfaye’s narrator implies that before a girl can be with him, she has to sleep with the rest of his crew.

“Back then, it was like, ‘Hey, you want to fucking hang out? Here’s my boys,’” he says. “It’s just me documenting what’s around me. Whether it is something that happened to me or something I see. Nobody’s forcing anybody to do anything. I really do believe a woman does whatever she wants to do.”

Tesfaye doesn’t seem to have spent much time thinking about the implications of these lyrics since he wrote them, and

seems taken aback by the suggestion of anything predatory: “I definitely should’ve seen this coming,” he says. “At some point, I’ll probably have to answer for this. But it’s consent, all of it.”

IN 2013, TESFAYE released “Kiss Land,” the much-anticipated follow-up to his mixtape trilogy. He was hoping it would launch him to the next level, but it didn’t take off. “It humbled me a bit,” he says. “I can be honest about it. Nobody wants to put out music where the reception’s not great.” Tesfaye considered moving to Seattle, where the depressing vibes might inspire something interesting. But he wound up in L.A. instead. “No matter how dark my experiences were during *Trilogy*, it’s nothing like L.A.,” he says. “L.A. is dark.”

Tesfaye is back in Los Angeles tonight, having landed early this morning. He’s still jet-lagged, sipping an Old Fashioned at a steakhouse downstairs from his hotel. He actually rents a house in town, in the Hollywood Hills, but he doesn’t

like staying there. “I think it’s haunted, to be honest with you,” he says. “I’ve had sleep paralysis. I hear voices sometimes. I heard the Hills are over Indian burial ground. But maybe it’s just the wind.”

Tesfaye is glad he ended up in L.A. “The relationships I made here have helped me so much.” He says he signed with his label, Republic Records, specifically because of its success in pop radio. “I could have gone with another label that was really good at branding, but I’d already built a strong brand myself,” he says. “I wanted someone who could do what I couldn’t.”

“One thing about Abel that people don’t realise is, he’s incredibly ambitious,” says Republic label head Monte Lipman. Tesfaye asked the record company to help assemble some hits. In the summer of 2014, Republic sent him a half-finished song by labelmate Ariana Grande, “Love Me Harder”, produced by the Swedish pop wizard Max Martin.

“It was a great song,” Tesfaye says, “but it was a little generic. I couldn’t hear myself on it. So I changed it and made it dark.” He rewrote the lyrics and sent them back, and Martin liked what he heard. “It was kind of like the label giving me an alley-oop,” Tesfaye says. [Cont. on 105]



The triumphant return of Adele

By BRIAN HIATT | *Photograph by* THEO WENNER



She's
the
One

AS ADELE STEERS THROUGH A SOUTH LONDON high street in her four-door Mini Cooper, with her toddler's vacant car seat in back and the remains of a kale, cucumber and almond-milk concoction in the cup holder, a question occurs to her. "What's been going on in the world of music?" she asks, in all sincerity. "I feel out of the loop!" 🐾 The only possible response is way too easy: *Well, there's this one album the entire industry is waiting for...* 🐾 "Oh, fuck off!" Adele says, giving me a gentle shove and letting loose the charmingly untamed laugh – an ascending cascade of forceful, cartoonish "ha's" – that inspired a YouTube supercut called "The Adele Cackle".

"Oh, my God, imagine," she continues, green eyes widening. "I wish! I feel like I might be a year too late." It's as if her last album, 2011's *21*, hadn't sold a miraculous 31 million copies worldwide in an era when no one buys music, as if it hadn't sparked the adoration of peers from Beyoncé to Aretha, as if it hadn't won every conceivable award short of a Nobel Peace Prize.

"But genuinely," she says, "I've lost touch with music. Not, like, all music" – she's a fan of FKA Twigs, loves Alabama Shakes, snuck into the crowd at Glastonbury to see Kanye – "but I feel like I don't know what's going on in the charts and in popular culture." She laughs again. "I've not lost touch with, like, reality. Just with what's current." Her Cockney accent is softening lately, but she still pronounces "with" like it ends with a "v".

She's driving under a sky that is grey and dismal even by the standards of early-October London afternoons. Rain is coming, threatening Adele's plans to take her three-year-old son, Angelo, to the zoo later. No one in the passing vehicles recognises her. They never do, not in this car. "Maybe if I went out in full, done-up, hair-and-makeup drag," she says. "Which it is: borderline drag! I'm not brave enough to do it." Instead, she's dressed like a grad student who barely got up in time for class, in a drapery blue-black sweater made of some hemplike fabric – it could almost be from Kanye's dystopian fashion collection – over black leggings and white low-top Converse. Her golden hair is gathered in a loose bun, and she's wearing twin hoop earrings in each ear. Her makeup is minimal, and though she claims to be develop-

ing a wrinkle or two, she looks strikingly young, with a clotted-cream complexion worthy of the cosmetics endorsements she's turned down.

Adele is fresh from a rehearsal with her backing band, where she perched on a chair facing the musicians and sang her first-ever live version of "Hello", the melancholy, surging first single from her highly-anticipated third album, *25*. (She turned 27 in May, but named the album after the

"I always feel like this is going to turn out to be a hidden-camera show, and someone is going to send me back to Tottenham."

age when she began work on it: "I'm going to get so much fucking grief: 'Why is it called *25* when you're not *25*?'") "Hello, it's me," she sings at the beginning of the single, as if there could be any doubt. When she finally puts the song out a couple of weeks later, it will rack up a record-setting 50 million YouTube views in its first 48 hours.

With a young child to raise, Adele took an unhurried approach to making the album. A full six months passed between writing the verses of "Hello" and nailing the chorus. "We had half a song written," says producer/co-writer Greg Kurstin, who didn't know if Adele was ever going

to come back and finish it. "I just had to be very patient."

The lyrics sound like she's addressing some long-lost ex, but she says it isn't about any one person – and that she's moved on from the heartbreaker who inspired *21*. "If I were still writing about him, that'd be terrible," she says. "'Hello' is as much about regrouping with myself, reconnecting with myself." As for the line "hello from the other side": "It sounds a bit morbid, like I'm dead," she says. "But it's actually just from the other side of becoming an adult, making it out alive from your late teens, early twenties."

Adele still hasn't decided whether she'll do a full-scale tour behind *25* – right now, the rehearsals are for TV performances. Her band has a few new members, and she's especially excited to have a percussionist for the first time, an addition inspired by her childhood idols: "The Spice Girls had a *mad* percussionist," she says.

In public, at least, Adele has had little to say – and nothing to sing – for the past couple of years, not since she and collaborator Paul Epworth won an Oscar for "Skyfall", the first decent James Bond theme song in forever. "When I have nothing to say," she says, "I'd rather just not talk." But it takes just a few minutes with her to see that silence isn't exactly her natural state. "I'm just fucking waiting for Frank fucking Ocean to come out with his album," she says. "It's taking so fucking long." She blinks, pauses, laughs again. "That sounds so stupid, coming from me, doesn't it?"

On some level, Adele refuses to allow her success to make it too deeply past her skin. She still sees herself as "some random girl from London", albeit one whose little car needs to be trailed by a bodyguard in a Range Rover. With the throwback classicism of its songwriting and its almost militantly organic arrangements, *21* stood to the side of the pop mainstream, even as it somehow outsold everything. Adele is trying to pull off a similar trick with her career itself. "My career's not my life," she says. "It's my hobby." She wants to be able to release her albums, live in public for a while, and then return to her private existence – for years at a time, maybe, so she can live enough to write the next set of songs. "I think she'll make 20 records," says her manager, Jonathan Dickins. "We're playing for the long game."

"People think I *hate* being famous," Adele says. "And I don't. I'm really *frightened* of it. I think it's really toxic, and I think it's really easy to be dragged into it." Early in her career, she faced frequent musical comparisons to Amy Winehouse, whom she met only a few times: "Watching Amy deteriorate is one of the reasons I'm a bit frightened. We were all very en-

Senior writer BRIAN HIATT wrote the N.W.A. feature in RS 767.



HELLO AGAIN

Adele on the set of the "Hello" video: "My career's not my life - it's my hobby."

tertained by her being a mess. I was fucking sad about it, but if someone showed me a picture of her looking bad, I'd look at it. If we hadn't looked, then they'd have stopped taking her picture. That level of attention is really frightening, especially if you don't live around all that showbiz stuff."

Adele still feels out of place among celebrities. Earlier this year, when she went backstage to meet one of her idols, Stevie Nicks, Adele found herself uncontrollably sobbing ("like, snot, everything"). "I'm not sure if I'll ever not feel a bit overwhelmed when I go to places where there are loads of stars," says Adele, who spent the first decade of her life in the poor, crime-plagued district of Tottenham. "I always feel like I'm gonna get thrown out. Or it's going to turn out to be some, like, hidden-camera show. Like someone's gonna send me back to Tottenham." She has recurring dreams of falling from tall buildings.

SINCE ANGELO'S ARRIVAL, Adele's life has been thoroughly domestic - though not, she emphasises, reclusive: "I've been to every fucking park, every shop, every supermarket you could ever imagine." She's in a "very serious" relationship with Angelo's father, Simon Konecki,

a bearish 41-year-old investment-banker-turned-philanthropist with a warm smile. She met him just as the *21* phenomenon was peaking. "He's so supportive," she says. "And that takes a very big man, because I'm very successful at what I do. My last boyfriend was uncomfortable with how successful I was, and the fact that he had to share me with lots of people." (She's referring to the *21* dude, though there was a relationship in between.)

Contrary to various contradictory rumours, she notes that she and Konecki have neither married nor split up. "I have said a million times I'm not married and everyone still says we are," she says. "But, yeah, we're still together. We haven't broken up. We've never broken up. We've been together. We just haven't felt the need to get married. We've got a kid together. I feel like that's a big enough commitment."

One new track, "Water Under the Bridge", is about him. It's a notably clear-eyed love song, with a feel vaguely reminiscent of Michael Jackson's "Human Nature": "If I'm not the one for you," she sings, "why have we been through what we have been through?" - and the chorus pleads, "If you're gonna let me down/Let me down gently." "It was sort of about a relationship suddenly getting really, really serious," she says, "and then getting a

bit frightened by it, and then realising that 'I think this must be right. This is the relationship that I want to be in for as long as I can possibly be in it.'" She hasn't played the whole album for Konecki yet: "What if he doesn't like it?"

She has quit smoking ("I absolutely loved it, but it's not that fucking cool when I'm dying from a smoking-related illness and my kid is, like, devastated") and has maybe one drink a week now. "I used to be able to drink anyone under the table and still be able to put on an all-right show," she says. "But with kids, hangovers are torture. They just know. They pick up on it and just go for you."

She is assiduous in a warm-up routine to protect her throat, which was threatened by a 2011 vocal hemorrhage that led to cancelled tour dates and throat surgery, followed by that dramatic return to the stage at the 2012 Grammys. In the wake of her operation, her already world-shaking voice became palpably bigger and purer-toned, and she's added four notes to the top of her range. "It does make your voice, like, brand-new," she says. "Which I actually didn't like at first, because I used to have a bit of husk to my voice, and that wasn't there at first."

Adele is trying to build stamina for her possible return to the road, so she's cutting

back on sugar, though not carbs altogether ("I'd never deprive myself like that!"), and hitting the gym, "to get in shape for myself, but not to be a size zero or anything like that". Her regimen? "I mainly moan," she says. Small cackle. "I'm not, like, *skipping* to the fucking gym. I don't enjoy it. I do like doing weights. I don't like looking in the mirror. Blood vessels burst on my face really easily, so I'm so conscious when I'm lifting weights not to let them burst in my face. And if I don't tour, you'll catch me back down at the Chinese!"

So at age 27, Adele is healthy and settled down, with no vices and enormous responsibility: raising a child, nurturing a career on a global scale. In short, then, no fun at all? She nods, laughing: "I'm no fun at all."

It's all happened so fast. "I do have this, like, overwhelming yearning for myself," she acknowledges. "Every single day I have it for, like, a split second. It doesn't take over my life, but I have a yearning for myself from, like, 10 years ago when my only responsibility was writing songs for myself before anyone cared, and getting to school on time. And there was something so amazing in that. You know what? What annoys me the most is that you don't realise how amazing it is to be a kid."

Besides her family, Adele mostly hangs out with a handful of close friends who date back to her teen years or earlier – one writes children's books, another is a TV producer. "As *21* got bigger and bigger, I started getting back with all my old friends," she says, mentioning hopes of taking them on the road if she tours. "I needed them big time."

So she has a squad? "I've heard about a squad," she says with an amused snort. "I wish *my* squad was all supermodels. We are, in our brains. I guess I have my own *squad*." She pronounces the word in a comical American accent. "It's not as interesting as some of the other squads that are around right now." She brightens. "But maybe Rihanna can be in my squad! That would be really cool. Oh, God. She's life itself, isn't she? I love her."

Adele pulls in front of an unlovely three-storey brick building, next to a Texaco station. The ground floor is a discount store. Beginning at age 14, Adele lived in an apartment upstairs with her mum, Penny. Her dad has largely been out of the picture since Adele was a toddler – he is her least favourite topic of discussion, and she refuses to attach any importance to his absence from her life. "Mine were the fourth, fifth and sixth windows," she says, pointing them out. Penny had Adele when she was just 18, and they have a fun relationship that Adele might compare to *Gilmore Girls* if she had ever seen it. She

was still living with her mum even during *21*'s success, and they remain close. "We always spoke about anything," she says. "There was never anything I was embarrassed about with my mum, which I think is the reason I never rebelled." To this day, Adele has never had so much as a puff of weed.

Adele wrote the songs for her first album, 2008's jazz-tinged, largely acoustic *19*, right upstairs. She got a deal with the powerful indie label XL straight out of her *Fame*-style performing-arts high school, mostly on the strength of a few MySpace demos. (She made zero concessions to the label's hip ethos: "She signed to XL, and she's talking in interviews about her favourite group being the Spice Girls," says Dickins. "She's not saying her favourite group is Einstürzende Neu-

**She was laid up,
but "21" kept selling:
"I felt like I'd lost
control. The bigger
your career gets,
the smaller your
life gets."**

bauten or Nitzer Ebb!") Across the street is the African Choice Market that used to be a pub where she'd get served underage, and Hollywood Nails, where she used to get manicures. She returned there, to the proprietors' delight, to primp for the 2012 Brit Awards.

ADELE GAZES UP AT her old apartment, her expression hard to read for once. Her yearning for her old self, her nostalgia, pervades multiple songs on her new album. Her favourite track is the Elton John-ish ballad "When We Were Young", co-written with singer-songwriter Tobias Jesso Jr., which shares a tiny bit of DNA with "The Way We Were", a song that brought her to tears when she saw Barbra Streisand perform it in person at the Oscars. At the last minute, Adele changed the name of another standout track from "We Ain't Kids No More" to "Send My Love (To Your Lover)". "Otherwise, you might as well just call the fucking album *Old*," she says.

The album's melancholia about the passage of time is very real, if slightly premature. "I've had a lot of regrets since I turned 25," she says. "And sadness hits me in different ways than it used to." On the lovely "Million Years Ago", which sounds like a Nineties Madonna ballad mixed with "The Girl From Ipanema", Adele sings, "Sometimes I just feel it's only me/Who never became who they thought they'd be." She's realised that some of the course of her life is set, that some doors are already closed. "There's a lot of things I don't think I'll ever get 'round to doing," she says. "Not because I'm famous, but just because I just don't think I'll ever have the time. Like being a journalist, or like being a teacher."

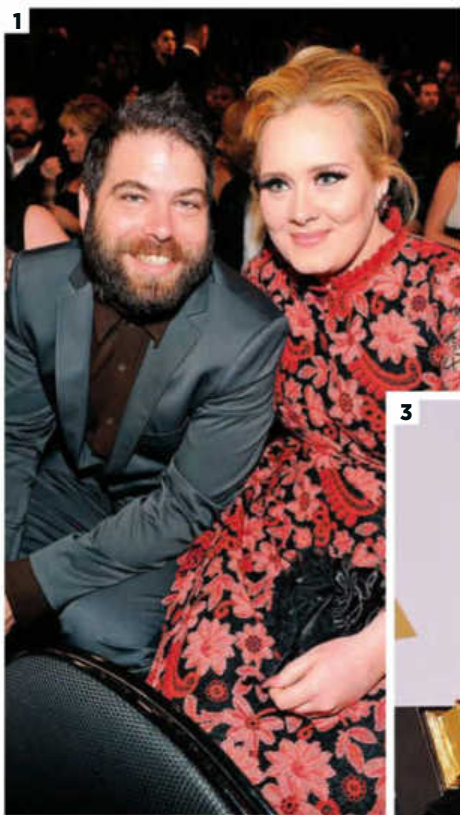
She takes a breath. "And I'm never going to be on my own again," she says. "I'm a mum and I'm in a very serious relationship, so it's never going to be just me again. I don't regret any of it. Like, those aren't the things that I regret. But I feel like I didn't have very long to myself. I was my mum's kid, and now I'm a mum." She laughs. "I had, like, a five-year window of just being me."

Around the time she became pregnant, Adele was feeling overwhelmed by her own success. She was particularly alarmed at *21*'s insistence on selling and selling at an alarming rate while she was laid up with a damaged voice and doing nothing to promote it. "I felt like I'd lost control of my life at one point," she says. "The bigger that your career gets, the smaller your life gets. I found this little, tiny janitor closet. That was my little space in my whole world. It was enough space for me. It was perfectly fine. But the idea of having to give up that little space, it really frightened me."

She had just gotten over her vocal troubles, had won all her Grammys and was contemplating a move to New York when she learned of her pregnancy. "All my plans went through," she says. "It was like, 'For good measure, let's see if I can cope with all of this and *then* having a baby.' But I think actually the pregnancy was perfect timing in the end. It might've seemed like the most ridiculous time to have a baby, but I was starting to get a bit afraid of everything." Angelo took away her fear. "When I had him, it made everything all right, and I trusted everything because the world had given me this miracle, you know, so I became a bit of a hippie, an Earth mother."

In fact, she says casually, "I don't know if I would've come back had I not had my kid."

The direct sonic influence is hard to find, but one of the chief inspirations for *25* was Madonna's *Ray of Light*. "You



ROLLING

(1) With boyfriend and “baby daddy” Simon Konecki. **(2)** Adele received an MBE from Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace, December 2013. **(3)** Winning six awards, including Album, Song and Record of the Year, at the 2012 Grammys.

know what I found so amazing about that record?” Adele says. “That’s the record Madonna wrote after having her first child, and for me, it’s her best. I was so all over the place after having a child, just because my chemicals were just hitting the fucking roof and shit like that.” She felt detached from her artistic self. “I was just drifting away, and I couldn’t find that many examples for myself where I was like, ‘Fuck, they truly came back to themselves’, until someone was like, ‘Well, obviously, *Ray of Light*.’” Adele listened to it over and over, and was particularly captivated by “Frozen”. “I took that song as ‘I’ve gotten my confidence to come and do me again.’”

Back at home, it’s almost time for Angelo’s nap, so Adele pulls over again so she can catch him in a quick FaceTime session before he goes down (in real life, unlike in the “Hello” video, she does not carry around an ancient flip phone). She is un-

derstandably protective of her boy, even successfully suing British paps who shot pictures of him, so she requests that I don’t describe his appearance. (He is, for the record, quite cute.)

For a while, she was trying to keep even his name secret, but it’s tattooed on one of her hands – the same spot on the other hand says *PARADISE*. “‘Cause Angelo is my paradise,” she says, with an uncharacteristic touch of bashfulness. (Among other ink, she also has a huge tattoo of three doves on her back.) She didn’t find out until too late that Lana Del Rey also has a “paradise” hand tattoo – a coincidence Adele finds hilarious. “She probably thinks I’m, like, some mad fangirl,” she says, launching into a campy rendition of the chorus of “Born to Die”. “I mean, I am a Lana fangirl, but not a crazy one.”

“Did you have fun at the library?” Adele asks the little guy on the screen. “What did you read?”

There is talk of elephants and Elmo, of chocolate buttons, and macaroni and cheese before Adele fondly sends Angelo off to his nap. “Will you press the red button? Peanut? Press the red button...”

“He’s a little angel,” she says. “All the things I really like about myself, he brings out in me, and he’s the only person that tells me no. He completely rules me. He’s the boss of me, and it’s so funny for other people to watch, because I’m the boss of everything in my work life.”

She can’t help feeling guilty when her work takes her away from Angelo. “I just feel bad all the time,” she says. But she took inspiration from Kate Bush’s comeback concerts. “It made me really want to hurry up and finish my record,” she says. “It made me desperate, actually, to come back.” She had read that Bush’s teenage son had encouraged her to return to performing, and she “sort of curated this show around her kid. I left, and I was like, ‘I don’t want to wait until my kid is 16 to show him who I am.’ Because I’m very proud of what I achieved. And I wasn’t, before I had Angelo. I didn’t understand, actually, what I had achieved and how far I had come. Because everyone wants to do something with their life, and we don’t all get the opportunity because shit gets in the way. So I feel fucking so fortunate that the stars just aligned for me and allowed me to have the most ridiculous ride ever.”

ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF AGO, Adele thought she might have nearly enough songs for an album. Her

manager wasn’t so sure, and they brought the demos to Rick Rubin, who had given valuable input on *21* – even though Adele ended up jettisoning some of his productions in favour of her rougher takes. Rubin listened, stroking his beard, probably. He looked at Adele and told her, “I don’t believe you.” The original group of songs was lighter in tone than anything she’s done. “You know the pop songs that are fantastic, but they don’t have much depth?” says Adele. “They were all a bit like that.”

“Adele was anxious to be finished with the new album and move forward with life,” says Rubin. “I stressed the most important thing was to be true to her voice, even if that took longer and was more work.... In the new material I heard, it was clear she wasn’t the primary writer – many of the songs sounded like they might be on a different pop artist’s album. It’s not just her voice singing *any* song that makes it special.”

"I actually took it really well," Adele recalls. "When he said it, I couldn't work out if I was, like, devastated, going to cry my eyes out. And then I just said, 'I don't really believe *myself* right now, so I'm not surprised you fucking said that.'" Rubin and Dickens both told her it sounded like she was rushing. "And that's not a way to make any kind of record," she says. "Especially when I'm trying to fucking follow 21. So I went back to the drawing board, really."

Earlier this year, she spent two months in Los Angeles, determined to move forward on her album for real. Among other sessions, she ended up working with the ubiquitous pop auteur Max Martin (along with collaborator Shellback) on the slinky "Send My Love (To Your Lover)", which may well be her catchiest, most modern song ever, built around an almost African-sounding guitar lick Adele wrote several years ago. She sought Martin out because she liked Taylor Swift's "I Knew You Were Trouble" ("I thought it was a really different side to her"). But soon she looked up Martin on YouTube, where she discovered the full breadth of his influence, the hits he'd written or co-written for everyone from N'Sync and Britney Spears to Katy Perry. "Send My Love" is the only kiss-off song on this album, addressed to the guy Adele dated between her 21 paramour and Konecki. "It's one of those, like, 'I'm fucking fine so fuck you' songs," she says.

A key early song was "Remedy", a big ballad with rolling piano chords written with Ryan Tedder, who also co-wrote "Rumour Has It" and "Turning Tables", from 21. It feels like Adele's own version of Bob Dylan's "Make You Feel My Love", which she covered on her first album. "When the pain cuts too deep and the night keeps you from sleep," she sings, with exquisite tenderness, "I will be your remedy." It made her tear up as she wrote it, and it has a similar effect on listeners. "I wrote it about my child," she says. "But I sang it for everyone that I really love. When I wrote it, I got my confidence back in my writing 'cause I believed in myself."

On 21, she came into sessions with Moleskine notebooks full of lyric ideas. This time, she often started from scratch, summoning songs from the air. Her collaborators would play chords while Adele

improvised melodies and lyrics, sometimes in a single burst. "It's impossible to question why she's where she is once you sit down with her to write a song," says Jesso. "She was the first introduction I had to somebody who could sing words on the spot that were actually really great." Jesso's manager told him that he could hear Adele's voice from the street outside the house where they were recording, that it was practically shaking its foundations.

She and Bruno Mars made an attempt at an uptempo song but instead created the unapologetically dramatic ballad

was "insecure" and that her music was "middle of the road". "It ended up being one of those 'don't meet your idol' moments," she says. "And the saddest thing was that I was such a big Blur fan growing up. But it was sad, and I regret hanging out with him." They didn't finish a single song. "No! None of it was right. None of it suited my record. He said I was insecure, when I'm the least-insecure person I know. I was asking his opinion about my fears, about coming back with a child involved – because he has a child – and then he calls me insecure?"

Adele wanted to modernise her sound, to add some synths and drum pads, to move away from the young-fogey vibe of 21 – on "River Lea", her track with Danger Mouse, she sings over choirlike keyboard chords created from her own sampled voice. "This time, it was about trying to come up with the weirdest sounds that I could get away with," says Epworth, who co-wrote two tracks on 25. "This album feels like it fits in maybe more with the cultural dialogue instead of being anachronistic to it. It's almost like she's trying to beat everyone else at their own game."

There's roughly a full album's worth of outtakes from 25. Adele is ruthless in her quality control, and was still making final tweaks to the track list when we met. "Some songs are not fucking good enough," she says. "And I think that's where a lot of people go wrong, thinking that people will buy any old shit from you."



ABOUT A GIRL

Adele arriving at the Mercury Music Awards in London in September 2008, the year her debut album 19 was released. "I had a five-year window of just being me," she says.

"All I Ask", complete with a climactic key change and Adele engaging in what she calls some of her most "showoff-y" vocals. "I've never sung like that before," she says. "Never sang that high. The funny thing is that Bruno was hitting those notes in the studio too." ("She's a superstar and sassy as fuck," says Mars, who recalls a brief disagreement over one lyric. "Once she recorded it, it became one of my favourite parts of the song. She told me she hopes I'm in the audience when she sings that line live so she can flick me off.")

In only one case did a collaboration go wildly wrong. She took a stab at recording with Blur frontman Damon Albarn – and he ended up telling the press that Adele

ADELE CELEBRATED A RECENT BIRTHDAY at Kurobuta, a Japanese pub-food spot with a cultivated rock & roll vibe; *The Guardian* described it as both "insanely delicious" and "ridiculously expensive". Tonight, she's returned, and the restaurant has arranged for us to have a private candlelit room in back, down a small flight of stairs. We have a comically huge distressed-wood communal table to ourselves. Sometimes it's good to be a random girl from London.

As we study the menu, which is heavy on fried food, Adele is amused to hear I'm trying to eat low-carb. "Let's cheat," she says, persuasively. Behind her are various vintage rock posters, including the cover of Jimi Hendrix's *Axís: Bold as Love*.

"Let's both cheat. It's my cheat day. Let's go mad!" She looks at the menu again. "I'm going in! Going HAM – hard as a motherfucker!"

She glances at an empty corner. "Last time we were here, they had a TV in there," she says. "They must've taken it all out. But it was showing, like, hardcore anime porn. It was just mad! It's a bit off-putting when you're eating, like, *sushi* and they've got all the hardcore porn stuff on."

She orders an amaretto sour – what she calls a "*Days of Our Lives*" drink – but then changes it to a glass of sauvignon blanc. "I don't know if I should be that fierce," she says. "I just remembered I'm being interviewed."

Adele is aware that certain critics have used her "classy" image and music as a cudgel against the Mileys of the world. She is really not into it. "I'd rather not be the person that everyone gets pitted against," she says. "If they do decide to get their body out, I would rather not be that person because that's just pitting a woman against another woman, and I don't hold any more moral high ground than anyone else. So that has pissed me off a bit. Not that I'm going to start getting my tits out now!"

She continues to think out loud. "Would I show my body off if I was thinner? Probably not, because my body is mine. But sometimes I'm curious to know if I would have been as successful if I wasn't plus-size. I think I remind everyone of themselves. Not saying everyone is my size, but it's relatable because I'm not perfect, and I think a lot of people are portrayed as perfect, unreachable and untouchable."

She finds a lot of the questions she's faced on these issues to be blatantly sexist. "I've been asked 'Would you do *Playboy*?' so many fucking times, it's ridiculous," she says. "And is that because I'm a woman or because I'm fat?"

Then again, she took note of the fuss made over a certain male celebrity when he slimmed down. "What I found really interesting was the big, big deal that was made out of Chris Pratt. When he lost all of his weight, it was, 'Oh, my God, who would have known he was so fucking fit?' It was a lot of attention on when he used to be bigger. I've never seen that with a guy."

Adele has been so busy the past few years that she's only faintly aware of the newfound prominence of feminism in the pop-cultural discourse. "If there's a movement, that's great," she says. "Who's doing it? Will you ask me if I'm a feminist? I don't think many men in interviews get asked if they're feminist."

I don't ask the question, but she wants to answer anyway. "I'm a feminist," she says, sipping wine. "I believe that everyone

should be treated the same, including race and sexuality." She recalls not being taken seriously in business meetings full of men, of encountering an attitude of "what do you know?" "It's like, 'Well, I'm the fucking artist,'" she says, sitting up straighter in her chair. "So I fucking know everything, actually! Like, don't fucking talk down to me!"

She enjoyed working with Sia for her new album, even though the songs didn't make it (one, "Alive", became a single for Sia instead). Adele realised she had never collaborated with a woman before. "I actually love the dynamic of us both being in there and just fucking being bossy," she says with a laugh. "And it's all these male producers, and they're all fucking shitting themselves 'cause we're in there."

**"It would be
a bit tragic to do
another heartbreak
album – not even
tragic, a cliché!
Even if I really was
heartbroken."**

DO YOU THINK everyone will be disappointed that I'm happy?" Adele asks. It's a couple of days after our dinner, and she's wearing a similar leggings-and-sweater ensemble, with the glam addition of glittery Margiela boots. We're sitting in her manager's bright, modern office on a quiet Notting Hill street, decorated with sports memorabilia and some of Adele's prizes. She points out her Ivor Novello song-writing award in the corner but neglects to mention her Diamond Award next to it, which commemorates more than 10 million copies sold in the U.S.

Adele knows that her songs have been a solace to her fans. "If my music can heal anyone's heart, then that is, like, the most satisfying thing ever," she says. "I don't think the record has a vibe of 'Whoo-hoo, I'm totally happy!' But with me being in a brighter space with my love life, will my fans be disappointed in me that I can't fix their broken hearts with a song that is brokenhearted? I don't want to disappoint them. But at the same time, I can't write a

sad record, like, for everyone else. That's not a real record, unless I *am* sad."

She laughs at the reminder that her last *ROLLING STONE* interview ended with her imagining what would happen if she were in a stable relationship: "No music!" she joked then. "My fans will be like, 'Babe! Please! Get divorced!'"

But she doesn't see it that way anymore. "It would be a bit tragic to do a heartbreak album again," she says. "A cliché, not even tragic! It'd be such a cliché. What if I *was* heartbroken? What the fuck would I write about? 'Cause I can't write a fucking heartbreak record again! So just flip and reverse it."

She does understand artists' temptation to create chaos in their lives. "I would have been totally up for that had I not had a kid," she says. "I didn't think I'd settle down. I always loved the drama, you know? Always wanted to be in love but always loved the drama, since I was very young."

The question of a tour looms large in Adele's mind, and she's giving herself until Christmas to decide. "When I've sat down and thought, 'What can I do to bring something new to the table?' It was just like, 'Tour.' Because I haven't done it properly." As she sees it, this album might be her last chance for many years to hit the road – once Angelo is in school, she doesn't want to take him out.

Adele has always had stage fright, with a particular fear of opening her mouth onstage and having nothing come out. Which is peculiar, because she's already lost her voice and regained it. "But it didn't happen midshow," she says, waving off the idea. She also has the unlikely vision of walking out onstage and seeing only five people in an arena.


She dreads having more throat problems. "If my throat goes, then I'll never be able to do a tour again," she says. "I'll be able to get my throat fixed again and do studio work, but do I want to do something and then fail at it and be too scared to ever try it again?"

Wherever she does perform, she promises to embrace her old stuff, joking that she's "forever 27". "Being defined by any record is a dream come true when you're an artist," she says. "It's like when I go and see certain bands – not to name any – and they don't play their fucking biggest hit? Cunts! That really annoys me."

"To the general public, it's not about your body of work," she says. "In most cases, it's about the song that reminds them of something in their lives. They take you into their heart."

"That's, like, the biggest thing ever." She smiles, eyes alight with all the music left to be made. "You have to play that song." 🎵





My Life in 15 Songs Billy Gibbons

ZZ Top's guitarist on how the Stones, Devo and
a backwoods cathouse inspired some
supercharged Texas-blues classics

By David Fricke

SINGER-GUITARIST BILLY GIBBONS OF ZZ TOP can remember exactly when his life in music truly began: Christmas Day 1962. He was 13 and “the first guitar landed in my lap”, Gibbons says, a fond smile breaking through his trademark beard. “It was a Gibson Melody Maker, single pickup. I took off to the bedroom and figured out the intro to ‘What’d I Say’ by Ray Charles. Then I stumbled into a Jimmy Reed thing.” He hums one of the legendary bluesman’s signature licks. “He was the good-luck charm. I’d play Jimmy Reed going to sleep at night – and in the morning.” • At 65, Gibbons – born in a Houston suburb, the son of a pianist-conductor – has played the blues for more than half a

century, across 15 ZZ Top albums with bassist Dusty Hill and drummer Frank Beard, including the 1983 10-million-selling smash *Eliminator*. That record, with its synthesised riffs and modernist grooves, reflected the long-standing adventure in Gibbons’ devotion to the blues, from his teenage psychedelic band the Moving Sidewalks up to his new solo debut, *Perfectamundo*, a peppery Afro-Cuban twist on his roots. “We don’t posture ourselves as anything other than interpreters,” Gibbons says of ZZ Top. He also notes something the late producer Jim Dickinson told him after the band made *Eliminator*: “He said, ‘You have taken blues to a very surreal plane. And it still holds the tradition.’”

99th Floor (Moving Sidewalks song)

Non-album single 1967

Nobody could escape the British Invasion. “99th Floor” was part Beatles and part Rolling Stones. The triplet drumbeat came off “Taxman”; the chord change was from a Rolling Stones single. The 13th Floor Elevators were a band from Austin – we started drifting into what they were doing: psychedelic sounds. The idea for “99th Floor” was, if the Elevators were going up, I was going further.

Red House (Jimi Hendrix song)

Are You Experienced 1967

A buddy said, “There’s a song that you oughta hear.” He was talking about “Red House”, by Jimi Hendrix, and that completely turned us upside down. It was blues taken beyond. Then the Sidewalks got hired to join the Experience tour in 1968. We didn’t have enough material for 45 minutes, so we started doing “Purple Haze”. I looked over and Hendrix was in the wings, wide-eyed, grinning. We had seen his showman antics from older blues guitarists. But he had a vision and aura.

Senior writer DAVID FRICKE wrote about Kurt Cobain in RS 763.

I remember him tiptoeing across the hall at the hotel: “Come in here. Do you know how this is done?” He was learning chops off Jeff Beck’s first record, *Truth*.

Just Got Paid Rio Grande Mud 1972

This was inspired by Peter Green’s opening figure in [Fleetwood Mac’s] “Oh Well”. I was living in Los Angeles, sitting on the steps of this apartment. It was raining and I couldn’t go anywhere, so I was trying to learn this figure. It got all tangled up. And it stayed tangled.

La Grange

Tres Hombres 1973

You had this explosion of Southern rock. But Texas was different – Southern enough but off to the side. We were extolling the virtues of our proximity to Mexico and that gunslinger mentality. “La Grange” was one of the rites of passage for a young man. It was a cat-house, way back in the woods. The simplicity of that song was part of the magic – only two chords. And the break coming out of the solo – those notes are straight Robert Johnson. He did it as a shuffle. I just dissected the notes.

Jesus Just Left Chicago

Tres Hombres 1973

There was a buddy of mine when we were teenagers – everybody called him R&B Jr. He had all these colloquialisms. He blurted out “Jesus just left Chicago” during a phone conversation and it just stuck. We took what could have been an easy 12-bar blues and made it more interesting by adding those odd extra measures. It’s the same chords as “La Grange” with the Robert Johnson lick, but weirder. Robert Johnson

was country blues – not that shiny hot-rod electric stuff. But there was a magnetic appeal: “What can we take and interpret in some way?”

Heard It on the X Fandango! 1975

Those border stations from Mexico would come in like a police call. XERF could be picked up in Hawaii, parts of Western Europe. It was fascinating to hear all of that blues and R&B on the radio. And Wolfman Jack, who was on XERF – man, he made the stuff out of control.

“Heard It on the X” was a celebration, acknowledging that influence. To this day, Frank, Dusty and I share the same influences. It’s in the first line: “Do you remember back in 1966?/Country, Jesus, hillbilly, blues/That’s where I learned my licks.” What you were hearing was indelible.

Tush Fandango! 1975

We were in Florence, Alabama, playing in a rodeo arena with a dirt floor. We decided to play a bit in the afternoon. I hit that opening lick, and Dave Blayney, our lighting director, gave us the hand [*twirls a finger in the air*]: “Keep it going.” I leaned over to Dusty and said, “Call it ‘Tush!’”

[The Texas singer] Roy Head had a flip side in 1966, “Tush Hog”. Down South, the word meant deluxe, plush. And a tush hog was very deluxe. We had the riff going, Dusty fell in with the vocal, and we wrote it in three minutes. We had the advantage of that dual meaning of the word “tush” [*grins*]. It’s that secret blues language – saying it without saying it.

I Thank You

Degüello 1979

I remember hearing the Sam and Dave single on the radio in Houston; I was turning the corner onto the Gulf Freeway, going to my grandmother’s house. Shortly thereafter, we were off to Memphis to record. I got to the studio and said, “Man, I heard that Sam and Dave song. I’d forgotten how good it was. It’s that keyboard part.” Lo and behold, the very clavinet used on their recording was in the studio. We fired it up, and it was ready to go. There was no way we were going to do Sam and Dave exact. But if you’re going to take a shot, make it a good one. That album was our first for Warner Bros., and they were doing such a good job. The song was our message – not only to the fans and friends but to the label guys.

“
I looked
over and
Hendrix
was in the
wings,
wide-eyed,
grinning.”
”



Tres Hombres

Above: Gibbons (right) and ZZ Top, 1983. Left: Gibbons (second from right) and the Moving Sidewalks with Hendrix, 1968.

Manic Mechanic *Degüello* 1979

As a kid, I'd stand on the front seat of my parents' car, watching cars coming in the opposite direction. And I could name 'em all. My dad bought a Dodge Dart – an entry-level, economy-priced car. It had no radio. The only amenity was a heater – talk about miserable, driving in that during those Texas summers. The sound you hear on the intro is that 1964 Dart.

I still have that car. It would not die. I do very little mechanic work, but I was at a speed shop in Pomona, California. The head honcho saw me with a wrench, going under a car, and said, "God, get out of there. That exhaust system is hot, and that beard is like a bale of hay." But I love those crazy automobiles.

Groovy Little Hippie Pad

El Loco 1981

I saw Devo doing a soundcheck at a Houston club, a country & western bar, of all places. I had heard their first album and kind of dug it. One of the guys in the band was playing a Minimoog, and he did this figure on it [*hums a bouncy robotlike riff*]. He was just noodling around. But it was enough.

What came out of that was "Groovy Little Hippie Pad" – same figure. It was a di-

rect derivative of punk. Devo was a big influence on that album – and the B-52s as well. They had that song "Party Out of Bounds". Our song "Party on the Patio" was an extension of that. [The critic] Lester Bangs played it for some punks in New York, and they dug it. It proved we weren't just a boogie band. We had this New Wave edge.

Gimme All Your Lovin'

Eliminator 1983

We had dabbled with the synthesiser, and then all this gear was showing up from manufacturers. We threw caution to the winds. This was one of the first tracks that started unfolding.

That video was the big car connection. I started that project, building the Eliminator [ZZ Top's customised 1930s Ford Coupe], in 1976. We were shooting in California, but I still owed the builder \$150,000. I went to the accountant: "It's on the album cover. Can I get a write-off?" "Yeah, you're promoting your business." I scared up the dough and paid it off.

Sharp Dressed Man *Eliminator* 1983

I went to see a film. The credits were rolling, and one of the players was described as "Sharp Eyed Man". That started it. The

track had this heavyweight bass line from a synthesiser. You know who was poppin' at this time? Depeche Mode. I went to see them one night, and it was a mind-bender. No guitars, no drums. It was all coming from the machines. But they had blues threads going through their stuff. I went backstage; I had to meet these guys. They were surprised – "What brings you here?" I said, "Man, the heaviness." We became friends. Martin Gore was a guitar player trapped behind the synthesisers. He was like, "Man, let's talk guitar."

My Head's in Mississippi

Recycler 1990

My buddy Walter Baldwin spoke in the most poetic way. Every sentence was a visual awakening. His dad was the editor of the *Houston Post*. We grew up in a neighbourhood where the last thing you would say is, "These teenagers know what blues is." But our appreciation dragged us in.

Years later, we were sitting in a tavern in Memphis called Sleep Out Louie's – you could see the Mississippi River. Walter said, "We didn't grow up pickin' cotton. We weren't field hands in Mississippi. But my head's there." Our platform, in ZZ Top, was we'd be the Salvador Dalí of the Delta. It was a surrealist take. This song was not a big radio hit. But we still play it live, even if it's just the opening bit.

I Gotsta Get Paid *La Futura* 2012

I heard "25 Lighters" [a 1998 Houston rap single by DJ DMD, Lil' Keke and Fat Pat] when it came out. It was so peculiar I couldn't forget about it. We were in the studio and [co-producer] Rick Rubin called up: "We need one more song." Our engineer Gary Moon was in the other room, watching Lightnin' Hopkins on YouTube. An earful of that prompted me to blurt out "25 Lighters". Gary said, "I engineered that." Isn't that ironic?

We put the two [sounds] together for "I Gotsta Get Paid". It was legit ghetto. Hip-hop is the cry of angst that propelled the blues. If blues is the highest of highs, lowest of lows and all points in between, what comes out runs right through hip-hop.

Treat Her Right (Gibbons solo song)


Perfectamundo 2015

The tune had a Texas legitimacy. The Roy Head single came out of Houston. And it was not about girls. It was about heroin. That a hit like that got through in 1965 – that's as blues as you can get, saying it without saying it.

The Afro-Cuban thing – it seemed to make sense there. The song goes so far back that most people like this because of the feel rather than "What an interesting twist on that old song." But there is that constant presence: Texas. It's this thing that helps make everything cool.



Buddy Guy
at home in
Orland Park,
Illinois, in
August



KING BEE

BY
PATRICK
DOYLE

PHOTOGRAPH BY
DANNY CLINCH

**BUDDY GUY MAY BE THE LAST BLUES GREAT
OF HIS ERA, BUT HIS MOJO'S STILL WORKING**

W

HEN BUDDY GUY is in town, he leaves his house in Orland Park, Illinois, around 7:30 p.m. and makes the 40-kilometre drive up I-55 to downtown Chicago, listening to B.B. King's Blues-

ville station on satellite radio on the way. He drops his big white Lexus in his usual prime parking-garage spot, then walks down the block on Buddy Guy Way to his club, Legends. Tonight is a little slow; just a few people from the Hilton across the street, eating at scattered tables on the checkerboard floor.

Wearing a white Legends baseball cap, a Hawaiian shirt and a bracelet engraved with NOTHING BUT BLUES, Guy stops and looks around for a minute, flashing a big grin, his gold-and-diamond-capped teeth sparkling. He takes a seat at his stool in the corner of the L-shaped

bar. The waitress already has his Heinek-
en with a glass of ice ready; it's his reg-
ular drink, despite the fact the staff are
wearing T-shirts advertising Buddy Brew
("The Damn Right Beer"). "When I go
home tonight, I don't wanna be caught
drunk," he says by way of explanation.
"The Buddy Brew is a little stronger.
That's why a lot of people like it, man –
you get your money's worth."

At this point in his life, Guy is the
greatest living Chicago bluesman, and
one of the most influential guitar players
ever. But for more than 50 years, he's also
been a club manager. He started manag-
ing in 1961 at Club 99 in Joliet, Illinois,
where he once booked Little Walter for
a 90-cent bottle of Seagrams gin. The
Rolling Stones and Muddy Waters came
to play Guy's tiny old club the Check-
erboard Lounge in 1981 (although their en-
tourage filled up 55 of the club's 65 seats –
"I didn't hear my cash register ring once,"
said Guy).

The walls of Legends are covered in
guitars donated by visitors: Jeff Beck,

Eric Clapton, Jimmie and Stevie Ray Vaughan. "Eric don't come around anymore," Guy says of Clapton. "He can't even look at whiskey." The Stones will still visit, though – all four band members enjoyed a rare night out together at Legends in June. ("Keith hasn't slowed down nothing," says Guy. "He drank everything I was selling in the club – moonshine, gin, whiskey, everything. Son of a bitch is made of iron, man.")

Sometimes Guy sticks his head in areas the staff thinks are below his pay grade – he gets testy when drink lines get too long, or when bartenders leave the cash register open. He proudly notes that merchandise sales increase 90 per cent when he's in the room. "Most clubs are not surviving because of DUI and nonsmoking," he says, "but they come see me sitting at the bar and take pictures."

Legends is one of the few major Chicago blues clubs standing. "I think if I closed my club, there might be two left," says Guy. When he first arrived here, in 1957, "there wasn't even space to have another club, there were so many. You could work Chicago seven nights a week. They were small, 40 to 50 people. But Muddy was playing, Sonny Boy Williamson, all of 'em. No cover charge."

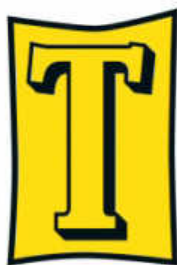
Guy's real career began not far from here at the South Side's 708 Club, where he developed his unhinged live show – playing overdriven licks behind his back, or with his teeth. His first night there, Waters stopped by, inviting Guy into his car for a salami sandwich and convincing him not to return home to Louisiana. Two decades younger than players like Waters and Howlin' Wolf, Guy would become the heir apparent to the greatest generation of blues and R&B players. "He was a younger blues musician in a field totally dominated by much older guys," said Clapton. "He was standing with the masters, holding his own."

"He just blew my head off," says Jeff Beck, who saw Guy on his first English tour in the mid-Sixties. "He came off the stage at the end of his act and walked through the crowd, playing one-handed, the guitar above his head. I'd never seen anything like it. He walked through the crowd, and it was like a bunch of disciples following him out of the building. Then he came back and finished his act. This was pre-Hendrix, pre-everybody." Jimi Hendrix would watch Guy from the crowd at the Newport Folk Festival and Manhattan clubs. And when Clapton saw Guy in 1965, he remembered, "I wanted to do what he was doing – a blues trio! I would be the slick frontman, a white Buddy Guy."

Associate editor PATRICK DOYLE wrote about Keith Richards in RS 769.

At the age of 79, Guy still plays more than 150 shows a year – blues cruises, casinos, state fairs, even, ironically, a Hendrix tribute tour. But after the death of his friend B.B. King earlier this year, somebody has to keep doing it. "When B.B. passed away, I kind of woke up and said, 'I'm the last one here,'" says Guy. "It's a little scary."

"He's the top honcho now, you know?" says Keith Richards. "He's the godfather now."



HIS MORNING, LIKE most mornings, Guy wakes up at 4:30 and is at the supermarket by seven. When I show up at his bungalow-style suburban home, he is simmering ribs in garlic, onions and bell peppers, as his mother's sauce recipe cooks in a

"WHEN B.B. PASSED AWAY, I WOKE UP AND SAID, 'I'M THE LAST ONE HERE,' SAYS GUY. 'IT'S A LITTLE SCARY.' ADDS RICHARDS: 'HE'S THE GODFATHER NOW.'"

separate pot. "I cook for myself, so I just try to make enough for tomorrow," he says. "It's just a routine thing."

"I got all of this shipped to me from the South," Guy continues as he opens a big cupboard of seasonings, containers with names like Memphis Mojo and Spice Supreme. "I got some shit you can't even let it pass by your face. Everything here is spicy except my tomato sauce. I'm from Louisiana, man!" On the top shelf, there's a jug of moonshine in a plastic container. He gets it from a fan from Tennessee. "You want some for breakfast?" Guy asks with a grin. (Richards approves of Guy's corn liquor: "It's very, very good," he says. "And there's a lot of it.")

After cooking, he'll go back to bed (friends know not to call between 1 and 6 p.m.) before driving to the club. "I get three and a half hours of sleep at night, three and a half in the afternoon," he says. "It's been like that for 50 years. I try to

break it, and I can't. As soon as I hear birds, it sounds like somebody calling me."

Guy's mother would also rise at 4:30 a.m. to cook on the wood stove of their shotgun-style one-storey house in Lettsworth, Louisiana – on a good day, biscuits and fried eggs from their sharecropper farm, which she'd put in a bag for Guy and his four siblings to take to school. The kids would kill the chickens. "We'd live to eat, and eat to live," he says. "When I got big enough to catch a fish, [my parents] were the happiest people in the world."

Guy loves talking about farm life: milking cows in the morning, herding cattle, picking cotton with his siblings. Guy says that he didn't know what electricity was until he was 12 or running water until 16; the family drank rainwater stored in barrels. "Wasn't no such thing as acid rain back then," he says. "You could be walking home from school after a rainy day, and you could just lay down on the ground and drink out of a horse's track." He smiles. "It had a sweet taste."

Guy was born in 1936; Jim Crow was a fact of life. He remembers walking to school with his siblings while the white kids took the bus. "They would pass us on the gravel road," he says. "The dust looked like fog coming, and we'd run off to the side of the road to avoid the dust. And they would be spitting and throwing stuff at us. We never let it bother us. Because that's the way it was." He tells the story of when his parents' white landlord told his son he could no longer hang out with Guy. (Years later, the friend visited Guy: "He came to my house in Louisiana and cried, asking me, 'Do you remember that?' And I'd say, 'It wasn't you. It was them.'")

"My parents were very religious," says Guy. "My mama used to say, 'If you get slapped, turn the other cheek, so they can slap the other side.' They didn't teach us no hate."

That lesson may explain why, when Guy first moved to Orland Park more than a decade ago, he did not get angry when he woke up one snowy morning and discovered someone had egged his home. Instead, after cleaning it up, he got out his snowblower and cleaned every neighbor's sidewalk. "They said, 'A black man gets eggs thrown on his house, and he's still plowing snow off everybody's sidewalk, corner to corner?'" Guy says. "And we were the best of friends after that."

In the Sixties, Guy did not echo the resentment of some of his peers toward the white rock bands that became rich playing the blues. "When those songs would come on, I heard a lot of guys say, 'I do it better,'" says Guy, gesturing toward his indoor pool. "My answer to that is, if you swim 10 lengths of a pool and I swim two, you're doing something I ain't."

"The British did more for us than any record company," he continues. He likes



Smokestack Lightning

(1) Guy onstage in London in 1965. “If you bring me out onstage, I’m going to give it to you,” he says. In 1970, he toured with Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead and the Band.

(2) Playing in 1969 with Eric Clapton, who called Guy “the best guitar player alive”.

(3) With B.B. King in 1993. They met on the Chicago club scene in 1958 and became best friends, later touring the world several times together. “He was the nicest man you would ever want to meet,” says Guy.



to tell the story about how the Rolling Stones only agreed to appear on the popular show *Shindig!* if Wolf came on the show with them. “That brought tears to my eyes,” Guy says. “They let white America know who we were.”

Every Christmas, Guy’s father would invite an acquaintance, Henry “Coot” Smith, to the house to entertain the family. “We had a case of beer and a jug of wine, and he’d drink it up and play, and then go to the next house,” says Guy.

Coot stomped and sang songs like John Lee Hooker’s hit “Boogie Chillen’”, a hypnotizing riff with no discernible melody that in 1949 became the first electric blues song to hit Number One on the

R&B chart. Guy asked Coot to play the song seven times in a row. “I watched him pick the thing with his fingers and produce a sound that gave me goose bumps,” Guy later wrote in his autobiography, *When I Left Home*. Guy took wires off their screen door and tried to imitate the sound. “I’d also take a rubber band and put it up against my ear and bang away as long as I could hear something,” says Guy. “I just loved the sound.” Finally, when Guy was 13, his father bought Coot’s guitar for \$4.35. The first song Guy learned to play was “Boogie Chillen’”.

Just after Guy finished eighth grade, his mother had a stroke, and “everything changed”, he wrote. “She could no longer smile....I’d be hungry for that smile for the rest of my life.” (Guy plays a polka-dot Strat as a tribute to his mother; before her death in 1968, he promised he would someday buy her a polka-dot Cadillac.) Guy dropped out of school, and the family moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where Guy worked on a conveyor belt at a beer factory, at a service station gassing up cars and as a janitor at LSU. He’d hear on the radio hits like Waters’ “Hoochie Coochie Man” and Elmore James’ “Dust My Broom”, playing them on his guitar during breaks. He eventually learned that all those acts were in one place. “I said, ‘If I ever get a chance, I’m going to Chicago, man,’” he says. “Just to see Muddy – that’s what it was all about.”

One night in Baton Rouge, Guy spent 50 cents to hear New Orleans electric bluesman Guitar Slim at the Masonic Temple. Guy remembers being the first one to the gig and being confused when he heard Slim’s guitar but couldn’t see him. After the band started playing, Slim entered the club from outside, his Strat hooked up to a 45-metre wire. “He was slick as grease and dressed to kill,” Guy wrote, “flaming red suit, flaming red shoes, red-dyed hair”. He says now, “Whatever these guys had, I wanted a piece of that.”

By then, Guy had started performing in juke joints and roadhouses. He bought a long cord and began doing Slim’s moves. “I wanted to play like B.B. King but act like Guitar Slim,” he says. The stunt is still part of Guy’s act; these days, he prowls clubs with his wireless guitar, usually stopping at the bar to throw back a shot of cognac.

Guy would grow into a dynamic, even confrontational, performer. (One night at Legends, I see him tell a loud customer to “shut the fuck up” from the stage.) “Buddy made it nasty and naughty,” says Carlos Santana. “B.B.’s nice, Buddy is not, and I mean that in a good way. He can take off people’s heads with a few notes. He comes from that generation like Albert King and Albert Collins – it was called the cut-and-shoot crowd.”

Guy arrived in Chicago on September 25th, 1957, the date he calls his “second birthday”. (“Buddy has a phenomenal memory,” says Richards. “He can tell you the time of day he arrived in Chicago and what train he was on.”) At first, Guy stayed with a family friend named Shorty, who’d also moved from Louisiana. He crashed on Shorty’s bed during the day while he was at work, and walked the streets at night, drinking coffee in diners, waiting for Shorty to wake up.

Six months after arriving, Guy was broke, ready to call his parents for a ticket home. But then, as he tells it, a stranger on the street noticed him with his guitar case and invited him to the 708 Club, where Otis Rush allowed him to sit in. The bar owner called Waters, who came to watch. "I was telling people how hungry I was," says Guy. "And when he heard me play, he said, 'Well, how can you play like that and be hungry?'"

Waters became a "father figure" to Guy. "Muddy taught me how to drink," he says. "He gave me my first drink of whiskey and told me it would stop me from being shy. And still to this day, whenever I've got to play, I've got to have my shot before I go onstage."

Waters' friend Willie Dixon opened the door for Guy at Chess Records, where, as a session guitarist, Guy earned a reputation for being punctual and easygoing. "I was the student," he says. He played on hits by Little Walter and Sonny Boy Williamson, classic records like Waters' *Folk Singer* and Wolf's "Killing Floor". "They called about 7:00 in the morning, and had been trying to do it all night," says Guy of the latter. "I did it in two takes, and Leonard Chess said, 'See, you motherfuckers, I told you I could call a son of a bitch who would know how to play the fuckin' shit in two seconds.'"

"You can find an old Chess recording and pick him out pretty quickly," says Derek Trucks. "He just had a vibe – it reminds me a lot of the great funk rhythm players that came after. It's not overdriven, but it's blown out in the most beautiful way – stinging, clean and concise."

Guy made \$15 for his work on "Killing Floor". He made more during those years driving a tow truck. "I'd drive that truck until it was time to play guitar," he says. "I kept the guitar in the truck, and then I would just go into the dressing room, take a shower and go straight to the gig and play till four in the morning and lay down in the car."

It wasn't much better for the established names: Guy learned that King was only making enough "to get from one town to the next". "Muddy was the only one who had a house," he says. "Lightnin' Hopkins didn't have a house like that, or Little Walter." Chess became notorious for getting artists to sign away publishing rights: "Every time I went to Chess and I had wrote a song that they thought was pretty good, they'd tell me to let Willie Dixon hear it," says Guy. Dixon was Chess' main A&R man, talent scout, producer and songwriter. "He'd say, 'That's a pretty good song, but you need a stronger line.' And if he changed one word, it was his song."

Chess was uninterested in Guy's wilder, more adventurous playing or in him as a recording artist. "At the club, I'd be jumping off the stage, turning that am-

plifier up loud as I could get, dropping the guitar on the floor and letting it ring for five minutes," says Guy. But if "I hit a note and let it ring in the studio, Leonard Chess would say, 'Get out of here with that.'"

Guy found an outlet with longtime collaborator Junior Wells on groove-driven classics like 1965's *Hoodoo Man Blues*, which Guy played on under a pseudonym for another label. Then around 1967, with blues disciples like Clapton and Hendrix on the rise, Guy finally left Chess. He got some small satisfaction when Leonard asked him in for a meeting. "The first thing he said was, 'I want you to kick me in my ass,'" says Guy. "And I said, 'What?' He said, 'Because you've been trying to show us this shit ever since you came here

**"BUDDY MADE IT NASTY
AND NAUGHTY," SAYS
SANTANA. "HE CAN TAKE
YOUR HEAD OFF WITH
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FROM THE CUT-AND-
SHOOT CROWD."**

and we was too goddamn dumb to listen. So now this shit is selling and I want you to come in here – you can have your way in the studio.' But by then I was gone."

After leaving Chess, Guy found a home on the hippie circuit, playing the Fillmore and touring on the 1970 "Festival Express" tour with Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead and the Band. "I thought maybe I'd get rich and make that kind of money if I followed those [rock] guys," he says. "I liked the women better than the reefer. I said, 'Y'all go smoke, and I'll watch these little gals.'" He sometimes wonders what would have happened if he had moved to the U.K. in the mid-Sixties, where Hendrix got his early buzz. "If I had went to England, I probably would have been bigger than bubblegum," he says.

Guy tends to talk himself down. "I'll tell you, man, those guys were naturals – B.B. King, Lightnin' Hopkins, Big Joe Turner," he says. "All those guys, man, had something that God gave them.... I don't have that." A few times, he refers to a local review of his performance with Clapton at the 2010 Crossroads Guitar Festival. "Eric called me out to play, and he said, 'Take a

solo.' And this motherfucker wrote that I got in Eric's way!"

Guy's sensitivity might explain why Santana unfailingly tells him how special he is when they are together. "If he doesn't wanna see that himself, that's his own business," Santana says. "But when he's around me, I do nothing but validate that man all the time. I tell him, 'Man, you're just as important as Einstein. You're just as important as fucking Nikola Tesla. You're just as important as Coltrane and Billie Holiday. You're a trailblazer with sound – and you're still alive.'"



GUY'S DRIVEWAY BEGINS across the street from a golf course in Orland Park. It takes 400 metres to reach a large barn that stores a '55 T-Bird, a '56 Ford Edsel and a Ferrari that Clapton encouraged him to buy. ("I don't want it no more now, 'cause you can't hardly get in there when you're my age," says Guy.) The large brown three-storey home, which features wood-panel walls and ceramic countertops, was decorated by his ex-wife, Jennifer. He's considering putting it on the market – it's too big for him; he's almost never swum in the pool – and buying an apartment in downtown Chicago.

This hot August morning, Guy is stirring oxtail stew, which he'll drop off at the club later. "It's for my ex-wife so she leaves me alone," he jokes. Guy is friendly with both his former wives, who can sometimes be found hanging out at the bar or in the office at Legends. The entire family – wives, 10 kids, umpteen grandkids – celebrated his 79th birthday together here at the house and at the club. Guy's grandson Keith has been crashing upstairs, and today is shooting hoops in the driveway.

Guy and his second wife, Jennifer, divorced after 11 years in 2002. His first marriage, to Joan, whom he met shortly after moving to Chicago, lasted from 1959 to 1975. "She told me, 'It's me or that guitar,'" he says. "A musician's life is not easy on a family.... The two [marriages] I had, I was never here. And they would come to me and say, 'I'm tired of being by myself.' And I said, 'What the hell do you think I do when I'm on the road?' I go to one little room. When you play at the club, you got a crowd. But otherwise, I'm by myself."

He hasn't stopped looking for someone. "I see a lot of good-looking women, and I have women call me and all that, man," he says. "But I haven't had any luck. In the last three years, I didn't go to bed with 'em. I just had conversation and brought them out here and fixed them a good dinner."

Guy heads into his living room and points out some of his favourite mem-



Key to the Highway

Above: Guy performing at his Chicago club, Legends. Right: Receiving his Kennedy Center Honor from President Obama. "It's a long way from picking cotton to picking the guitar in the White House," Guy said.



orabilia collected over his 60 years in the business: a photo of him grinning onstage with Clapton at the Royal Albert Hall in 1990; a thank-you note from Mick Jagger for appearing in *Shine a Light*. There's a photo of Guy with his family and the president and first lady from the first of four times Guy was invited to the Obama White House. "He's from Chicago, so he knows," Guy says of Obama. "As soon as he put his arm around me, I said, 'Mr. President, it's a long way from picking cotton to picking the guitar in the White House.' And we laughed."

Guy points out a painting of Hendrix, and tells the story of the day Hendrix brought a reel-to-reel recorder to tape Guy's guitar workshop at Newport. "Everyone was saying, 'Hendrix is here,'" Guy says. "I'm like, 'Who?' We went back to the hotel and played until the sun rose. He was so damn good, so creative."

Next to that is a painting of Stevie Ray Vaughan, playing his guitar behind his back – a trick he learned from Guy. "That one's priceless," he says. Vaughan had been a fan ever since he heard Guy singing and playing alongside Wolf and Waters on the 1963 *American Folk Festival of the Blues* LP as a kid. Whenever

Guy played Antone's nightclub in Austin, he invited Vaughan and his older brother Jimmie onstage. "He became like a big brother to us," says Jimmie. "It was such a trip." Guy played with Stevie Ray at Wisconsin's Alpine Valley in 1990 – Guy took a different helicopter back to Chicago; Vaughan's helicopter crashed, killing him and four others.

Guy is still supporting younger blues players. He routinely lets kids onstage to show off, most notably Massachusetts teenage guitar prodigy Quinn Sullivan, who first played live with Guy at seven. "Parents will bring 'em around and ask, and if they can play, I'll give them an opportunity," Guy says. "Because when I went to Chicago, everybody looked at me and said, 'Who are you?' I don't ask, 'Do you have any experience?' I just say, 'Can you play this?' If he says, 'Yeah,' I say, 'Come on up!'"

In the corner of the room, there's a jukebox stocked with records of the guys who did the same thing for Guy: Little Walter, Waters and King. "They made me

who I am," Guy says. He first heard King's 1951 hit "3 O'Clock Blues" as a teenager in Baton Rouge, and it became an early song in his repertoire. In 1958, King stopped by Guy's regular gig at the 708 Club, and offered words of encouragement, telling Guy to use straight picks, not finger picks. "I couldn't believe he was talking to me," Guy says. Later, when Guy was gigging at a Chicago nightclub that was in danger of going out of business in the Sixties, King played there for free.

Guy and King toured the world several times together until 2011, with Guy opening. "Him and I were the last ones still travelling around, taking the music around the world," he says. Guy was impressed with King's work ethic; he played 250 dates per year into his seventies. "The last time we was talking, I said, 'B, you know all the money in the world ain't no good if you can't use it,'" Guy says.

What'd they talk about on tour? "Oh, it was mostly profane," Guy says with a laugh. "With B.B., he'd play two chords and it was back to the women." (Guy likes to tell a story about King giving advice on Viagra's side effects: "Take the headache.")

When he heard King's health was failing, Guy travelled to visit him one last time at his home in Las Vegas, but some of King's kids said he didn't want to see anybody. "Families go crazy if they think you got \$10, and they're gonna fight about it," says Guy. "He was the nicest person you would ever want to meet. And I know damn well he wouldn't have told those people not to let me see him when I flew out there to see him."

Guy said goodbye to King at his funeral in Mississippi in May. "They let me get a little bit closer to his casket than anybody else – special treatment," he says. "But I had very little time to just sit there and remember the greatest things he had said to me and what we had done together. There were a lot of cameras. They showed a film of him playing, and I said, 'Man, that's what made me wanna keep playing.'"

Guy's assistant Annie stops him; he needs to tape a few social-media videos thanking his Twitter followers and promoting an appearance at a Las Vegas blues festival. Guy has touring down to a science. "I just saw that we get to play my hometown of Baton Rouge," he says at one point. He'll have an overnight bus ride after the show, but he's happy, because he'll get to stay in the house he just bought there and cook for himself: "I get off work, they rush me to the house, I take a shower, take a bowl of soup, come downstairs with my bag and head to the next gig."

"B.B. King dedicated his life to the blues until he couldn't go no more," says Guy. "Muddy, Wolf, all of them did it. Because they loved it as much as I do. And now I'm gonna do it myself. I think I owe that to them."

The Dark Net

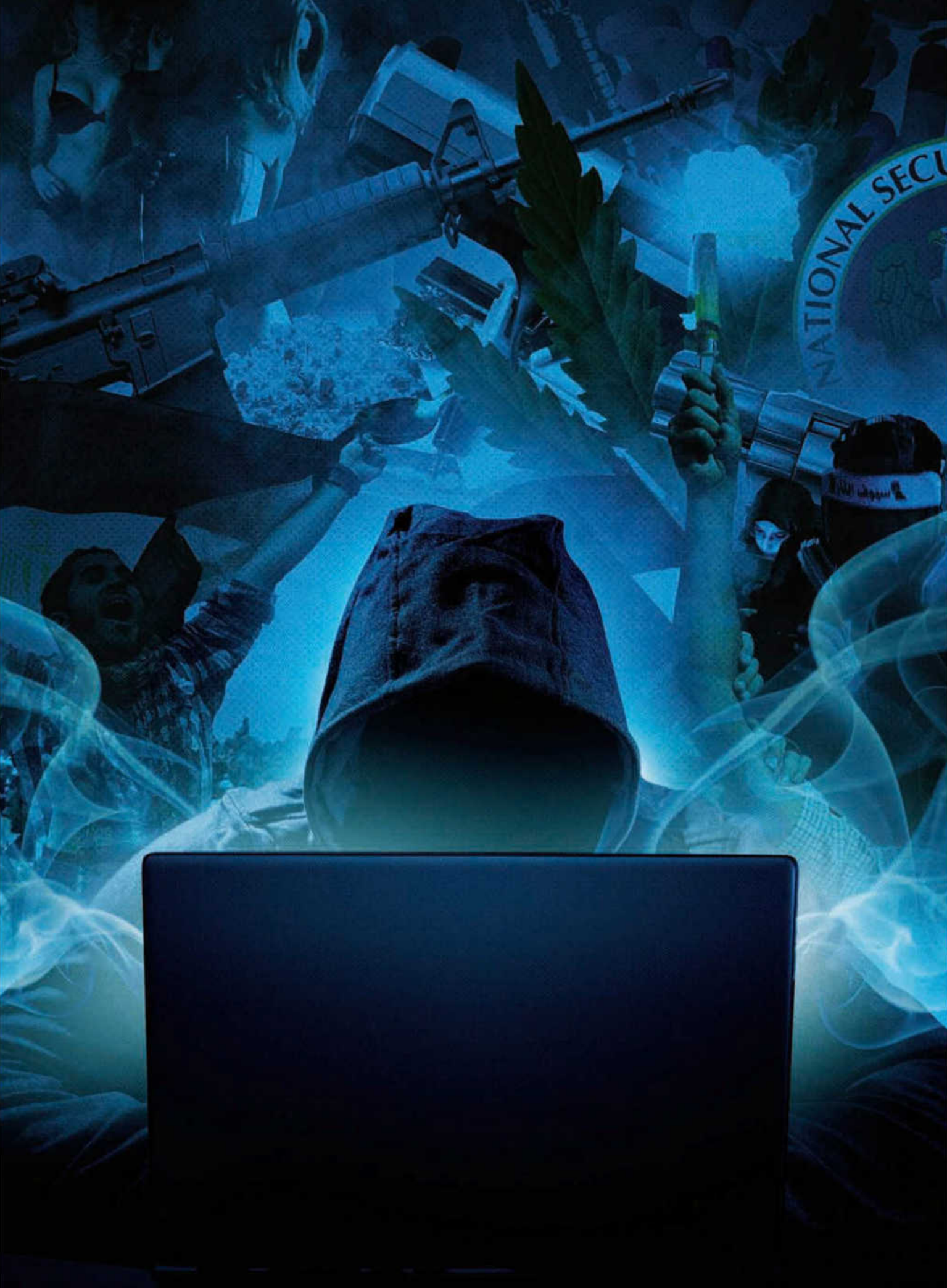
Inside the Web's secret space for drug dealers, arms traffickers, hackers and political dissidents – all funded by the U.S. government

By David Kushner

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN McCABE

ON JULY 15TH IN PITTSBURGH, David J. Hickton, a grey-haired U.S. attorney in a crisp dark suit, stepped out before an American flag to announce the feds' latest victory against online crime. "We have dismantled a cyber-hornet's nest of criminal hackers, which was believed by many to be impenetrable," he said. "We are in the process of rounding up and charging the hornets." By the next morning, more than 70 people across the world had been charged, arrested or searched in what the Department of Justice called "the largest coordinated international law-enforcement effort ever directed at an online cybercriminal forum".

After an 18-month international investigation led by the FBI, known as Operation Shrouded Horizon, hackers on a site called Darkode were accused of wire fraud, money laundering and conspiring to commit computer fraud. The trail of crimes was massive, with one member compromising companies including Microsoft and Sony and another swiping data from more than 20 million victims. Hickton said Darkode posed "one of the gravest threats to the integrity of data on computers in the United States and around the world". Its computers were considered "bulletproof" from the law by running on offshore servers – including one traced to Seychelles, the remote island nation in the Indian Ocean. "Cybercriminals should not have a safe haven to shop for the tools



of their trade,” said FBI Deputy Director Mark F. Giuliano, “and Operation Shrouded Horizon shows we will do all we can to disrupt their unlawful activities.”

At least for a bit. Two weeks later, “Sp3cial1st”, the main administrator of Darkode, posted a retaliatory statement on a new website – underscoring the feds’ struggle to police the Internet. “Most of the staff is intact, along with senior members,” Sp3cial1st wrote. “It appears the raids focused on newly added individuals or people that have been retired from the scene for years. The forum will be back.” He vowed the organisation would regroup on the Web’s deepest, most impenetrable region, the Darknet – a space where anyone, including criminals, can remain virtually anonymous. And the Darknet could never be shut down – thanks, conveniently, to the feds, who created it and are still financing its growth.

The Darknet (sometimes called the Dark Web) works on the Tor browser, free software that masks your location and activity. Originally designed by the Naval Research Lab, Tor receives 60 per cent of its backing from the State Department and the Department of Defense to act as a secure network for government agencies as well as dissidents fighting oppressive regimes. It is a privacy tool that has been used for both good and evil. Over the past decade, Tor has empowered activists to spread news during the Arab Spring; it has helped domestic-violence victims hide from online stalkers; and it has allowed ordinary citizens to surf without advertisers tracking them. But at the same time, the Darknet, which Tor enables, has become the primary cove for criminals like Ross Ulbricht, imprisoned founder of Silk Road; the hackers behind the recent Ashley Madison attacks; and the international crew busted by the feds in July. As an instrument for both activists and criminals, Tor presents an increasingly difficult problem for law enforcement to solve – exacerbating the hapless game of whack-a-mole facing those who try to bring law to the most lawless part of the Net. And the battle over the Darknet’s future could decide the fate of online privacy in the U.S. and abroad. As Hickton tells *ROLLING STONE*, “It’s the Wild West of the Internet.”

THINK OF THE WEB AS AN iceberg. Most people only see the so-called Surface Web above the water: all the news and gossip and porn

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that’s just a Google search away. But dive below and you’ll see the vast expanse of the Deep Web: all the data that search engines can’t find, which is much larger than the Surface Web. This includes anything behind a paywall (like Netflix), a password-protected site (like your e-mail) or a Web page that requires you to do your searching there (like when you’re trying to find court records).

The Darknet lurks in the Deep Web, because the sites there can’t be found by search engines either. But here’s the big difference: The Darknet is composed of people and sites that want to remain anonymous and, unless you’re using the Tor browser, are nearly impossible to find. Tor lets you peruse the Surface Web, just as you do with Firefox or Safari, but it also allows you to surf Amazon *and* Silk Road. Using a regular browser like Firefox, you can be identified by your Internet Protocol (IP) address, the numerical code that can be traced to your unique device. But on the Darknet, your location – and the locations of the people overseeing the sites you search – remain hidden. Most people use Tor for law-abiding privacy purposes. In fact, according to the Tor Project – the government-funded nonprofit that maintains the browser – Darknet surfing accounts for only three per cent of Tor usage. (And criminal activities are just a fraction of that.) But because the Darknet is so seemingly shadowy and mysterious, it has become ominous in the popular imagination, a creepy catchall that includes everything scary lurking online: terrorists, paedophiles, dope dealers, hackers-for-hire.

In the past year, some of those scarier elements have been surfacing. In May, the feds sentenced Ulbricht, founder of Silk Road – the online black market that generated roughly \$200 million in sales – to

life in prison. In August, hackers dumped the personal information of 36 million users of Ashley Madison, the cheaters’ website, on the Darknet. After ISIS claimed responsibility for a shooting outside a Prophet Mohammed cartoon contest in Texas in May, the Darknet was singled out for blame. Michael B. Steinbach, assistant director of the FBI’s counter-terrorism division, told the House Homeland Security Committee that encryption tools have given such terrorists “a free zone by which to recruit, radicalise, plot and plan”. Without the ability to adequately monitor the terrorists online, Steinbach went on, “we’re past going dark in certain instances. We *are* dark.”

Despite the high-profile busts of Darkode and Silk Road, the Darknet is thriving. According to an August study by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, criminals earn an estimated \$100 million a year by selling drugs and other contraband on hidden websites using the virtual currency bitcoin, the digital cash that doesn’t require a credit card or bank to process the transactions. The feds aren’t just battling bad guys adept at hiding online, they’re also facing a massive rush of ordinary people looking to score anonymously. “Given the high demand for the products being sold,” the CMU researchers conclude, “it is not clear that take-downs will be effective.”

Though a lot of people think you have to be some kind of hacker to navigate the Darknet, it’s surprisingly easy to sell or buy illegal goods and services. Click on Tor, and it looks like any other browser – complete with its own cartoonish onion logo – though it moves more slowly because of complex routing behind the scenes. Instead of ending in a .com or .org Web address, Darknet sites end in .onion and are often called onion sites. Since Google doesn’t crawl onion sites, you need to use rudimentary Darknet search engines and listings such as the Hidden Wiki or Onion Link.

Black-market Darknet sites look a lot like any other retailer, except there are categories for, say, benzos, psychedelics and used AK-47s instead of woks and lawn ornaments. On Silk Road 3, a site unaffiliated with the original one, you can search by category, or scroll down to see pictures and descriptions of bestsellers: 1 g 90 per cent-purity coke, x10 methylphenidate XL 18 mg (Concerta/Ritalin), and so on. Vendors are verified and rated by the community, just as on eBay and other shopping sites.

But while navigating the Darknet seems easy enough, law enforcement has a much more difficult time busting the bad guys for one simple reason: The same tools that keep government agents and

Darknet retail sites function like Amazon, but you can purchase psychedelics and AK-47s instead of woks or lawn ornaments.

Feds and Geeks Unite

(1) U.S. Attorney David Hickton announced charges stemming from the Darkode site in July. **(2)** Drugs confiscated from a Darknet vendor in Germany in March. **(3)** Tor founders Syverson (bottom centre), Dingledine and Mathewson (top, from left) continue to develop the browser.



dissidents anonymous keep criminals virtually invisible too. "This is the crime scene of the 21st century, and these traffickers are finding all kinds of ways to cover their tracks," says Karen Friedman Agnifilo, Manhattan's chief assistant district attorney, who's among those leading the fight against criminals online. "Law enforcement has to play catch-up."

PAUL SYVERSON, A 57-YEAR-OLD mathematician at the U.S. Naval Research Lab, created Tor as a means for people to communicate securely online. "We certainly were aware that bad people could use it," says Syverson, wearing an M.C. Escher T-shirt in his cluttered office in Washington, D.C., "but our goal was to have some-

thing for the honest people who need to protect themselves."

Since its inception in 1923, the NRL has been the military's most esteemed research and development lab, inventing everything from radar to GPS. In 1995, Syverson and his colleagues conceived a way to make online communications as secure as possible. The idea was to provide a means for anyone – including government employees and agents – to share intelligence without revealing their identities or locations. With funding from the Department of Defense, Syverson brought on two scruffy graduates from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Roger Dingledine and Nick Mathewson, to help bring his vision to life. Like Syverson, Dingledine – a ponytailed privacy activist from Chapel Hill, North Carolina – saw the project as a way to empower everyone in the age of online surveillance. "How can we build a system that gives you privacy in the face of the large governments who are surveilling the Internet as much as they can?" Dingledine asks. "That's a really hard research problem."

To understand how the problem was solved, imagine a spy taking a train from Paris to Berlin. If the spy travels directly,

he can easily be followed. But if he takes a series of trains between several cities – Paris to Amsterdam, Amsterdam to Madrid, Madrid to Berlin – he's harder to trace. This was essentially how Syverson and his team designed the solution. Instead of a spy in Paris directly accessing a computer in Berlin, he would be routed through a random series of computers along the way, hiding where he was based. They called the network the Onion Routing, evoking this layered means of online access.

If only military people used Tor, though, it'd be obvious that the traffic was government-related. "We wanted to have a network that would carry traffic for a variety of users," Syverson says, "so you don't necessarily know if this is a cancer survivor looking up information or somebody from the Navy." In order to do that, Syverson and his team made a decision he calls "central to the security of the system": They designed Tor to be freely available online and open-sourced, which meant it could be assessed and improved by anyone around the world.

The Tor network wasn't just designed to hide who is accessing websites, it was created to give websites the ability to mask the locations of the servers hosting them. One of the ideas was to provide a kind of secret bunker for government websites, so that if they were under attack, agents could visit a hidden version of the site online without hackers tracing them. These were the sites that ended with .onion. The Tor creators call them "hidden services" sites – today, it's more sensationally known as the Darknet.

In 2003, Tor software was publicly released. Word about the browser spread on forums among privacy advocates and researchers, and it soon became the most resilient and important tool for anyone seeking to preserve their anonymity online. Geeks, agents and activists formed a volunteer network of nodes that routed Tor traffic anonymously across the world. Before long, people could reliably surf the Internet without being traced – out of sight of anyone who wanted to know who they were, where they were travelling or what they intended.

TOR'S EARLY ADOPTERS weren't criminals – they were dissidents. One of them is Nima Fatemi, a black-clad 27-year-old Iranian who serves as a key Tor evangelist – helping others around the world use the software to fight oppressive regimes. "We needed

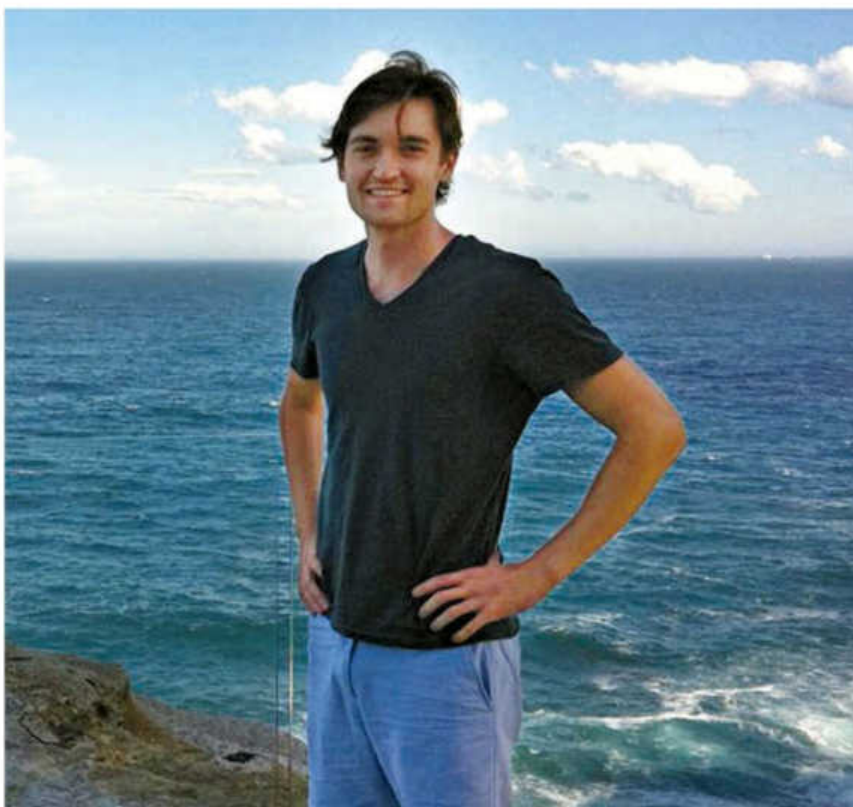
something different to connect to the Internet safely," he tells me. "I found Tor and thought, 'This is the tool.' It was peace of mind."

In the summer of 2009 in Tehran, Fatemi was running for his life from riot police after shooting photos of a protest. "I felt it a duty because so many people outside of Iran had no idea that we were protesting," he says. "The state TV was just showing photos of flowers and stuff." As soldiers chased him, Fatemi tore through the streets, leaping over a fallen woman, and turned into a courtyard where a sympathetic family gave him cover. "The police would attack me as if I had an RPG on my shoulder," Fatemi says.

It's dangerous to be a social-media activist in certain parts of the world. Recently, a blogger in Brazil was beheaded, and another in Bangladesh was killed with machetes. In Iran, blogger Soheil Arabi was sentenced by the Supreme Court to be hanged for "insulting the Prophet Mohammed" in Facebook posts. (His sentence was later commuted to two years of mandatory theology study, but he is serving a seven-and-a-half-year jail sentence for insulting the Supreme Leader.) This year, four secular bloggers were murdered in Bangladesh alone.

At the time of his near capture, Fatemi had been uploading photos that were used on Facebook and Twitter to spread breaking news of the Iranian government's crackdown on dissidents. Under increased scrutiny, he'd turned to Tor to continue working anonymously – and to help himself and his fellow activists stay out of jail. Fatemi held private workshops in Iran, teaching friends and family how to use the software and thus strengthening the network, as more users meant more nodes with which to relay and hide the online traffic. "We spread the tool everywhere," he says.

In the decade since the Tor software has been released, it has spread virally beyond the U.S. government and into the activist community. This is fuelled in part by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the digital-rights group which used to fund and still champions Tor as a powerful pro-democracy tool. Jacob Appelbaum, the noted activist who has worked closely with Edward Snowden and Julian Assange, calls it "surveillance resistance". By using Tor in place of another browser, protesters and journalists can log on to Twitter or surf dissident chat rooms with far less risk of being tracked by a government that might imprison them or worse. "There are countries where browsing a



The Fall of Silk Road

Ross Ulbricht, the 31-year-old founder of Silk Road, was sentenced to life in prison in 2013. Before being taken down by the FBI, his site sold items ranging from drugs to fake IDs on the Darknet.

political website about democracy can get you thrown in jail," says Jeremy Gillula, a staff technologist at the EFF. "That's the most life-and-death reason why Tor needs to exist."

During the Arab Spring, Tor helped facilitate protests throughout the Middle East. Nasser Weddady, a 39-year-old Mauritanian-American activist, was living in the States and began promoting the underground browser – becoming one of the most influential social-media dissidents during the uprising. "There would be no access to Twitter or Facebook in some of these places if you didn't have Tor," he says. "All of a sudden, you had all these dissidents exploding under their noses, and then down the road you had a revolution."

With the Tor Project still largely being financed by the DOD, Mathewson and Dingledine have kept the software and community evolving. For Mathewson, a bushy-bearded 38-year-old sci-fi fan, its continuing spread among activists throughout the world exceeded his dreams. "I'd be getting e-mails from people saying, 'I'm pretty sure your software saved my life,'" he recalls. "I'd say, 'I'm very glad you're alive, but I'm just this person who's been writing software – I hope I don't screw anything up!'"

ON JANUARY 27TH, 2011, Ross Ulbricht, operating under the pseudonym Al-toid, announced the launch of the first black-market site to exploit the cloaking powers of the Darknet. "I came across this website called Silk Road," he posted on a drug forum called Shroomery.org, posing as a customer. "It's a Tor hidden service that

claims to allow you to buy and sell anything online anonymously."

Ulbricht, who ran the site as Dread Pirate Roberts, was the first to fully exploit Tor's potential for fostering a new kind of criminal enterprise. It was more of a novel idea than a technical feat. Ulbricht, or anyone running an illegal Web page, could simply create it on the Tor hidden network. This made it difficult not only to find who was hosting the address, but also who was visiting it. But Ulbricht went further by using bitcoin to make the subsequent transactions just as hard to track.

By the summer of 2011, word of the Darknet hit the press and the cops. In a July news conference about Silk Road, Sen. Chuck Schumer, of New York, demonised drug sellers and buyers who were "hiding their identities through a program that makes them virtually untraceable", and called on the Drug Enforcement Agency to crack down. *Time* magazine called the Darknet "a haven for criminals...where drugs, porn and murder live online". The *Daily Mail* warned that "hiring a hitman has never been easier".

Many activists in the Tor community, however, wince when they hear the word "Darknet". Criminal sites, they say, represent a tiny fraction of .onion traffic. For them, the focus on criminality obscures Tor's greater intent. "I don't think very much of the term 'Darknet'," Mathewson says with a groan. "I think it's pretty much a media creation."

Whatever it's called, powerful agencies are still taking the Darknet seriously. According to an Edward Snowden leak in October 2013, the NSA, during a top-secret presentation in 2012, considered Tor a threat. "Tor stinks," reads the title of one NSA slide. "We will never be able to de-anonymise all Tor users [but] we can de-anonymise a very small fraction." (When contacted by *ROLLING STONE*, the NSA declined to comment.) In another of Snowden's revelations, Britain's intelligence agency, the Government Communications Headquarters, dismissed the democratic potential of Tor as "pseudo-legitimate uses" that paled next to the "bad people" who ruled the Darknet.

As a result, law-enforcement agencies began seeking new ways to infiltrate the Darknet. In July, Interpol held its first-ever training on "identifying the methods and strategies used by organised crime networks and individuals to avoid detection on the Darknet". That same month, FBI Director James Comey explained to a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee the agency's plight in tracking encrypted communications. "The tools we are asked to use are increasingly ineffective," he said.

But according to e-mails recently leaked online, there was at least one com-

DARKNET'S BLACK- MARKET BOOM

Launched in 2003,
the online criminal cove
now has sales up to
\$180 million a year

28

Approximate number of illegal
Darknet black markets online

70

Percentage of Darknet
sales that consist of pot,
Ecstasy or coke

9,386

Estimated number of unique
vendors on the Darknet

35

Number of vendors
selling more than \$1 million
of illegal product

**\$150-\$180
million**

Total annual sales on all Darknet
markets combined

\$475,000

Average sales per week on Silk
Road during March 2012

\$300,000

Average sales per day on Silk
Road during summer 2013

**\$7,000-
\$30,000**

Average price of a gun
on the Darknet's largest illegal
market for weapons

pany pawning a solution: Hacking Team, a software-security firm based in Milan, which equips governments to fight back against criminals, activists and dissenters on the Darknet. As Hacking Team CEO David Vincenzetti wrote to his private mailing list after Comey's remarks, "The Darknet can be totally neutralised/decrypted. The right technology to accomplish this exists....Just rely on us."

The e-mails came as part of a breach in July by an unknown attacker against Hacking Team's internal database. They revealed that the FBI has spent almost \$775,000 on Hacking Team software and services, including tools that, as Vincenzetti suggested, specifically targeted criminals on the Darknet. In one e-mail from September, an FBI employee wanted to know if the latest version of Hacking Team's spyware could still "reveal the true IP address of target using Tor....If not, can you please provide us a way to defeat Tor...? Thank you!" (When contacted, the FBI said it does not comment on specific tools and techniques.)

Of course, this can all seem nutty, wasteful and insidious that one end of the U.S. government is trying to crack the secret code funded by another. When I ask Syverson how he feels about the government trying to compromise Tor, he declines to comment, saying that this is out of the scope of his work. Mathewson, however, shrugs off the seemingly bizarre scenario. "It's not like people are being followed around by shadowy agents," he quips. "I guess we kind of always assumed the NSA tries to break all interesting new encryption."

Eric Rabe, spokesman for Hacking Team, will not confirm or deny the FBI's use of the company's tool. But he was quick to promote its software, which, he tells me, allows a client to see whatever a target is doing on a computer or mobile device, including surfing the Darknet. In the wrong hands, such a tool could be used to infiltrate or infect a victim's machine. And the market for this product is only growing, as agencies try to break Tor, which Rabe calls "the front door to the Dark Web". He goes on, "Clearly, Tor is used very broadly for criminal activity. I don't think even the most staunch human rights activists would say that's not true."

But most activists view the government's battle against the Darknet as the new Reefer Madness, a misguided attack on something becoming increasingly endangered: privacy and anonymity online. "There are a lot of governments around the world that are trying to prevent people from reaching these sites," Dingedine tells me one afternoon at a cafe in Philadelphia. When I ask him which other government agencies are trying to break Tor,

he gives a shrug. "The simple answer is 'I don't know,'" he says. "And that's really disturbing."

DAN KAUFMAN, THE CHIPPER white-haired innovation head at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency – the DOD's research and development wing – is a former video-game designer who quit his job to fight real-life criminals. In a darkened conference room in the agency's nondescript Arlington, Virginia, headquarters in June, he turns on a large high-definition monitor to show me how DARPA is trying to win the Web's ultimate game: cops and robbers in the digital age.

By way of example, he pulls up an ad for a prostitute named Cherry. In her photo, she's thin, Asian, and looks 19 but could be in her thirties. Her description reads that she's five feet four, has shoulder-length brown hair and no tattoos or piercings. Cherry is a sex-trafficking victim, just one of an estimated 600,000 to 800,000, according to the U.S. State Department, who are moved across international borders each year. This is the fastest-growing crime industry in the world, pulling in annual profits of nearly \$100 billion.

And just like other criminal enterprises – like drugs and weapons – it has migrated from the streets to the hidden corners of the Internet: anonymous forums, encrypted chats, subscription services and other sites that search engines are unable to locate. This problem gave DARPA the idea to take action. "It started that simply: 'This is terrible, we should do something about it,'" Kaufman recalls.

What they did was create Memex: a search engine that works on the Deep Web and Darknet. Memex can crawl the hidden Web, finding sites and storing data so it can later be scoured, just as one would search the Surface Web with Google. It's the latest and most important weapon for online investigators and represents a new phase in the conflict that may expose the hidden Internet like never before. As Kaufman shows me, with just Cherry's e-mail address and a click, Memex displays a glowing matrix of associated leads: phone numbers, massage-parlor addresses, photos associated with her online ads.

Memex is the brainchild of Dr. Christopher White, a former DARPA program manager. Just 33, White earned his accolades as DARPA's senior official in Afghanistan and, in the past couple of years, set his attention on the Darknet. The inspi-

ration, he tells me, came from his tours of law-enforcement agencies, which seemed woefully unprepared for rooting out criminals online. "They were using Google and Bing as part of their jobs," he says. "The things they were looking for weren't online through those mechanisms – they were in the deeper Darknet."

Government agencies and law enforcement now work closely with DARPA to customise Memex for their needs, and are also exploring its use for finding ISIS recruiters hiding online. The technology is part of a booming industry based on taming the Darknet. So called "threat intelligence" firms – such as iSight Partners, which *The New York Times* compared to "military scouts" – charge clients like banks and government agencies as much as \$500,000 to comb the Darknet for potential hackers. According to Gartner, a technology research firm, the market could reach \$1 billion by 2017.

But could exposing the Darknet ultimately kill the last place remaining for Internet privacy? Online freedom fighters hope Memex won't have the same effect on those using the Darknet for legal means. "Memex might be a fascinating and powerful tool, but, like any other tool, it can be used for good or ill," a cybersecurity blog-

HOW TOR EMPOWERS INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM

The secretive browser is not just used by criminals – it allows activists to fight oppressive governments anonymously



Kenya

In January, journalists and human rights leaders launched AfriLeaks, a whistle-blower site to expose corruption in Africa – home to three of the top 10 worst-ranked countries for free press, according to the Press Freedom Index. The service relies on Tor to ensure the anonymity of its sources in Kenya and across the continent.



China

The Great Firewall, the Chinese government's efforts to block or censor the Internet, has been used to stop political dissidents from using Tor. But China faces a dilemma – it can't shut off the Internet completely. "China has to walk a fine line because they can't get their corporations off the Internet," Dingle-dine says.



Russia

Freedom fighters in Russia use Tor to access banned sites, but the "Safe Internet League", backed by the country's three largest mobile providers, supported a ban on Tor in February. "Do not forget that Tor is an American development and it's used by American intelligence agencies," the SIL said.



Egypt

During the Arab Spring, activists in Tahir Square used Tor to access the Internet and communicate with other protesters throughout the Middle East after regimes restricted Web access. "There would be no access to Twitter or Facebook in some of those places if you didn't have Tor," activist Nasser Weddady says.



Iran

Activists like Nima Fattemi have relied on Tor in Iran to provide information and aid. "The government only sees that you're connecting to Tor," he says. "They don't see what you're doing there." In March, Tor was attacked by the government, which succeeded in cutting the browser's users by 20 per cent.



Aiding the Arab Spring

A protester raising the Egyptian flag in Cairo in March 2013. Nima Fatemi (right) used the Tor browser to spread news of revolt in Iran and is now its top proponent.



ger recently posted online. “That same technology can very well be put to use to invade privacy and trace the flow of legitimate and private data.”

“Privacy is a huge issue,” says Kaufman, who recently left DARPA to become deputy director of Google’s Advanced Technology and Projects group. Memex has built-in limitations. It can only comb content on the Deep Web and Darknet that is publicly available – those sites that aren’t password protected or behind a paywall. This limits Memex’s ability to bust a site like Darkode, which required passwords for users. Memex won’t kill the Darknet – but it will make it a lot more exposed to law enforcement. “I think the world is better with transparency,” Kaufman tells me.

IN LATE AUGUST, ADMINISTRATORS for the online black market Agora, one of the biggest hubs for buying dope after the bust of Silk Road, took to the DarkNetMarkets forum on Reddit with a warning. “Recently research had come that shed some light on vulnerabilities in Tor Hidden Ser-

vices protocol which could help to de-anonymise server locations,” they wrote. In other words, something in Tor seemed seriously fucked.

They seemed to be referring to a new MIT study that claimed to have found crucial weaknesses in Tor that allowed researchers to break the anonymity of its users. “We have recently been discovering suspicious activity around our servers,” the Agora administrators continued, “which led us to believe that some of the attacks described in the research could be going on.” And, for safety’s sake, they were temporarily taking their site off the Darknet until they found a fix. As of this writing, Agora is still offline.

For the time being, the cops battling the Darknet have reason to celebrate. Despite the braggadocio of the Darkode forum alum, who promised they’d resurface on the Darknet, they have yet to be

seen (though this doesn’t mean they’re not there) – and the first guilty pleas of its users are coming. Eric “Phastman” Crocker, a 29-year-old from Binghamton, New York, recently pleaded guilty to violating anti-spam laws after he was busted for selling malware. He is scheduled to be sentenced on November 23rd, and faces up to three years in prison and \$250,000 in fines.

But as the feds count their victories, the people who depend on anonymity are still fighting for their lives. In August, Saudi Arabia’s Supreme Court decided to review the controversial case of Raif Badawi, a 31-year-old blogger sentenced to a decade in prison and 1,000 lashes, after being arrested in June 2012 for allegedly criticising the kingdom’s clerics. Badawi, who has since won a PEN Pinter Prize, personifies the importance of preserving online anonymity and freedom – made possible by the same software that powers the Darknet. Speaking out in support of Tor, California Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren is among the small group of lawmakers who believe the feds shouldn’t lose sight of its original purpose. “Tor was developed with

support by the U.S. government to promote freedom,” she says. “That’s why we support the creation of Tor and remains the core reason why Tor exists.”

As the battle continues over the Darknet, Tor’s popularity only becomes more mainstream. Facebook now offers a .onion version of its site on Tor for those wanting to feel less watched. In June, speaking at an event for EPIC, a privacy and civil liberties nonprofit, Apple

CEO Tim Cook railed against government efforts to crack consumer devices. “Removing encryption tools from our products altogether, as some in Washington would like us to do, would only hurt law-abiding citizens who rely on us to protect their data,” he said. “The bad guys will still encrypt; it’s easy to do and readily available.”

Mathewson predicts that other Web browsers like Firefox will build Tor into their functionality, and he hopes that privacy will become “a default mode of communication on the Internet” within five years. But the circuitous chase will surely continue. For all the activists using these tools to better the world, there will be criminals employing the same tools to exploit it – and law enforcers hunting them down. “I’m as concerned about privacy rights as anybody,” says U.S. Attorney Hickton, “but would you have us do nothing?”

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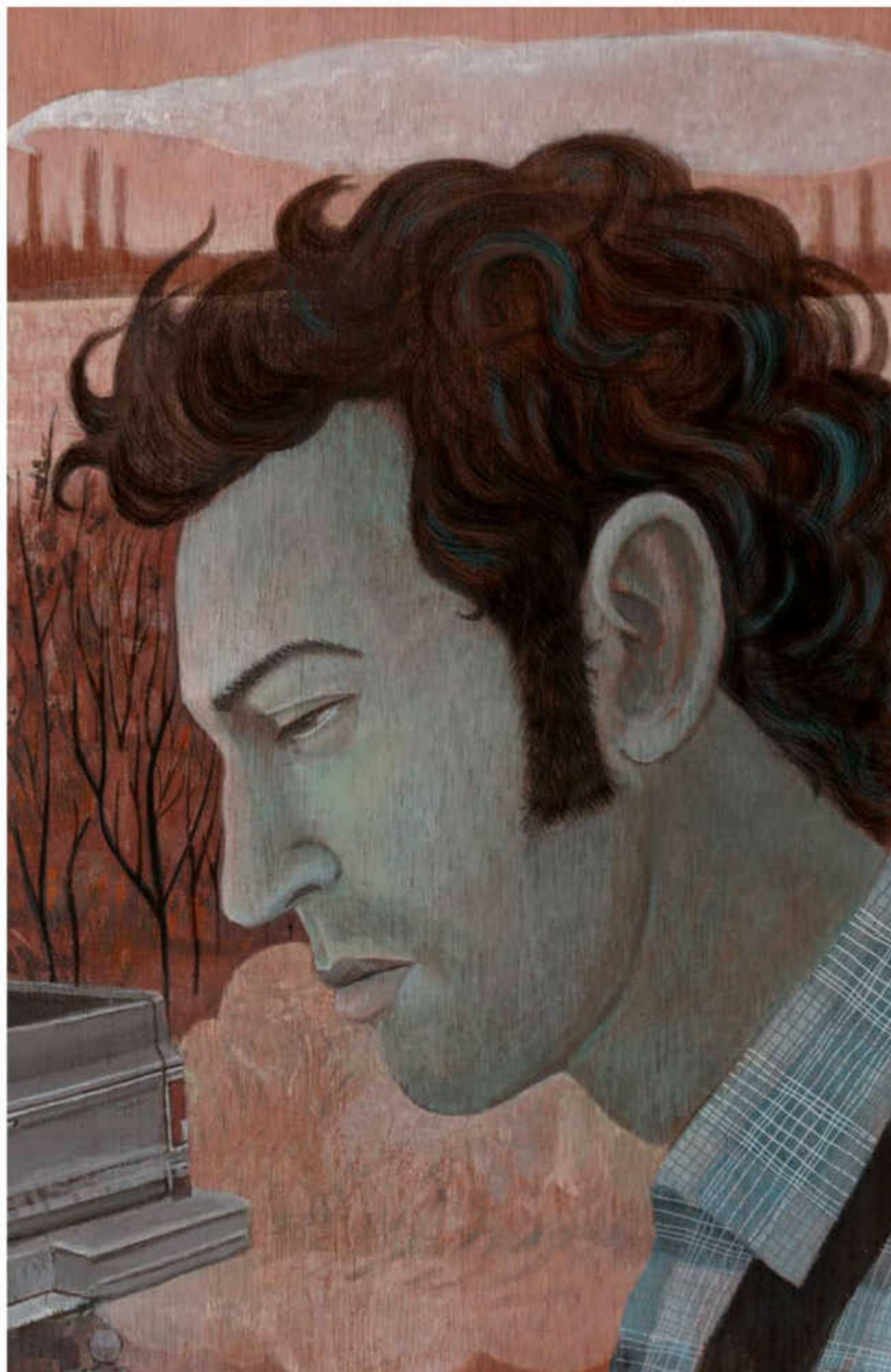
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Reviews

NEW ALBUMS Pg. 89
TECH Pg. 98
MOVIES Pg. 102
DVDS Pg. 104

Diving Back Into the River



The Boss answers a 35-year old question then opens the floodgates on his reasons



Bruce Springsteen

The Ties That Bind: The River Collection Sony

★★★★

BY MICHAEL DWYER

"Woulda made a great single album." That's been the lazy fan's rush to judgment since the double-LP dreamtime of the *White Album* and *Exile On Main St.* A million blogs and playlists are devoted to proving it now. Still, funny how wrong they all sound.

In the shadow of the Clash's flawless *London Calling*, Bruce Springsteen caught some flak for *The River* in 1980. The raucous frivolity of "Sherry Darling", "I'm a Rocker", "Ramrod", "Cadillac Ranch" and especially (ooh-ooh I got a) "Crush On You" fell foul of the pause button on many a righteous cassette.

As it turns out, the Boss already had his answer to the "What if?" question. The unsuited single version of his difficult fifth album makes its official debut here, third in a 4-CD sprawl that illustrates yet again what an embarrassment of riches he had not just stuffed in his late Seventies notebooks but fully realised on tape with his E Street Band.

The chief surprise about the 10-track version is that five didn't make the double – at least in the form we know. "Cindy" and "Be True" are winsome teen romances, all "little

girl" pleading and music box tinkle, presumably to shake up the prevailing *Darkness On the Edge of Town* (which might easily have been a double too: check the copious outtakes on 2010's *The Promise*).

The garage rockabilly take of "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)" is almost too comical and the curiously detached draft of "Stolen Car" fails to haunt anything like the killer denouement of the album we know.

On that score, key tracks "The River", "The Ties That Bind", "The Price You Pay" and surprise hit "Hungry Heart" were evidently never in doubt, but no "Point Blank"? No "Independence Day"? The unsurprising verdict is that whaddya know, he got it right back in '80 by blowing it all out to 20 tracks with all their lightweight and heavyhearted contradictions.

He got it right ... blowing it out to 20 tracks.

This much, hardcore fans perhaps already know. All but 11 of the 27 rare tracks gathered here have already surfaced on B-sides or the *Tracks* clear-out of '98 – although again, some in altered states.

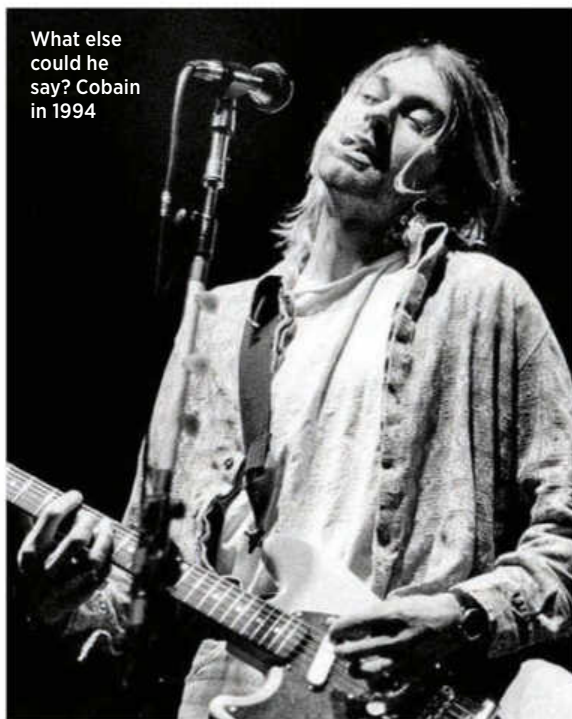
Those 11 form a de-facto "new" album at the front half of Disc 4, which opens with a classic pair of urban panoramas from the rev-head street poet king. With its trademark skating organ and rolling drum fills, "Meet Me In the City" is an explosive Saturday night call-to-action from a freshly busted jailbird to – well, the sax player is sure up for it.

"The Man Who Got Away" is another neat twist on "burning rubber and spilling gasoline", a small time crime mystery that bleeds from silver screen to mean streets.

That's where the rest unfolds, naturally, from the doomed lovers "running through the rain" in "Little White Lies" to the more ominous company of "Night Fire"; from the noir shimmy of "Chain Lightning" to a scrabbly acoustic demo of "Mr Outside": a fringe-dweller character portrait too chirpy for *Nebraska*.

KEY TRACKS: "Meet Me In the City", "The Man Who Got Away"

What else could he say? Cobain in 1994



Revealing Kurt Cobain At His Most Raw

Rare demos, stoner experiments and more unearthed from late star's home archives

Kurt Cobain *Montage of Heck*:

The Home Recordings Universal ★★★★★



This powerful collection – a companion to the HBO documentary *Montage of Heck* – plays like Kurt Cobain's phantom memoir. Director Brett Morgen went through 200 hours of cassette tapes to find these song sketches and demos. Some of the 31 tracks will resonate only with deep Nirvana scholars, and the album could be seen as stretching an incredible legacy a little too thin. But it's surprising how much of it is compelling, even revelatory – including a pair of acoustic instrumentals ("The Happy Guitar", "Retreat"), the gruelling "She Only Lies", and Cobain's last recorded song, "Do Re Mi (Medley)".

As in the film, the feedback loop between Cobain's tormented upbringing in Aberdeen, Washington, and his pained genius is revealed starkly. On the demo for "Rehash", he works a power-sludge riff and yells "solo" and "chorus", telescoping the music into a more fully formed future. Just a few tracks later, he gives a spoken-word reading that describes a teenage suicide attempt. It's one of many moments here that show how Cobain could be at once self-cancelling and self-mythologising, scarily aware that even if he hated himself and wanted to die, his most inchoate or slapdash creations deserved a chronicle. He was right, of course, in spite of himself.

JON DOLAN



Cage the Elephant

Tell Me I'm Pretty Sony

★★★★★

Kentucky rockers find their perfect match in Dan Auerbach

The marriage of the Black Keys' Dan Auerbach with Kentucky garage jammers Cage the Elephant was always going to be a fortuitous pairing. On *Tell Me I'm Pretty* Auerbach takes the rein as producer and injects a fuzzy focus to Cage's usually scattered creations. Where once they'd duck and weave from psych to blues to punk, now there's a renewed interest in scuzzy, early Sixties jams: the loose swagger of "Cry Baby" and "Sweetie Little Jean". Singer Matt Shultz inhabits the swaggering cad character with a winking grin, but his best moments ("How Are You True") are reserved for when he stops chasing prospects and looks at himself in the mirror to wonder what it's all for. **JULES LEFEVRE**



Dallas Crane

Scoundrels Nylon Sounds/Rocket

★★★★★

Triumphant, stonking return from Oz-rock vets

Nine years on from 2006's *Factory Girls*, that Dallas Crane have grown into a smarter, better band is no surprise. That they've given themselves a masterful Don Walker-ish overhaul certainly is. *Scoundrels* is intelligent, bluesy, mature and unpredictable; the work of rock & roll lifers wrestling with a world larger than wasting away in an Abbotsford bar. Dave Larkin isn't just the tip-toed screamer of yore, giving "Come to Light" and "I'm Sorry Darling" the requisite amount of soul to properly accompany a drunken late night bar-stool apology. The Pete Satchell-led lilt of "Lucky Me", meanwhile, when paired with Larkin's muscly "Disillusioned" makes for an inspired moment, spiralling off into reality and regrets. **J.C.**

GETTY IMAGES

Retracing the Memory

Former Pink Floyd leader's inessential return to the well

Roger Waters *The Wall* Sony ★★½



Roger Waters can't leave *The Wall* alone. Since his third solo album in 1992, the ex-Pink Floyd leader has devoted himself to

revisiting the group's 1979 conceptual behemoth – the account of alienation and decline of surrogate rock star, "Pink".

This live album accompanies the 2014 film of the same name. It draws from Waters' massive 2010-2013 tour, where he performed the record in its entirety 219 times. Divorced from the arena show's visual excess – which included a giant wall erected between stage and audience – it suffers.

The band sound pedestrian; a flaccid "Mother" has the crowd oohing at unknowns; we can only assume the explosions. Worse, David Gilmour's vocal parts are handled by session vocalist Robbie Wyckoff, whose featureless work ignores the album's sensation of opposing consciences.

There's non-album additions to pore over too. Among them, "The Ballad of Jean Charles de Menezes" is a wan tribute to the innocent Brazil-



ian man shot by police following the 2005 London bombings, and "The Last Few Bricks" just filler to allow a set change.

The second half is more successful as dynamics shift, recreating the original. But that's what nags. *The Wall's* brilliance was a band's icy portrayal of a mental deterioration that mirrored their own. Now Waters can only retrace the memory, reflect the excess. The warm thrill of confusion is gone.

KEY TRACKS:
"One Of My Turns", "Comfortably Numb"

MARCUS TEAGUE



Enya

Dark Sky Island Warner

★

Questionable return of the 'Orinoco Flow' singer

She counts her millions in a 19th Century castle in Dublin, for heaven's sake. The whole world knows her name, and what every blessed one of her records sounds like: one of those Elvish forest dream sequences from *Lord of the Rings*, essentially – the mercilessly extended DVD version. So why Enya has agreed to release another one exactly like them after seven years of dignified silence is simply unfathomable. Its maddeningly repetitious cycles of made-up gibberish and light orchestral sky worshipping come in two speeds: tub-thumping rowboats-in-the-mist ("The Loxian Gate") and flaccid pseudo-classical outtakes from *Cats* ("So I Could Find My Way"). New age? Old rubbish.

M.D.



The Holy Soul

Fortean Times Damn You

★★★★

Gareth Liddiard cranks up the fuzz for Sydney underdogs

The Holy Soul arrive steeped in underground cred: they've collaborated with members of Can and Pere Ubu, the Drones' Gareth Liddiard produced their latest album, and Dave Graney and Clare Moore even sing back-ups on a song. The Sydney quartet swing between fuzzily melodic garage and more smouldering, sprawling meditations, though "There's a Hair on the Soap" nods to Drones-style derangement with gnashing guitar and Trent Marden's leering vocals. But there are more than just two sides to this band: "History Part II" jumbles heavy Hendrix psych with a wry, jazzy lightness, and "In Bed by Nine" nails twanging, Creedence-esque rock. It gels surprisingly well – all the more robust for their variability. D.W.



The Tongue

Hard Feelings Elefant Tracks

★★★★

Veteran finds balance on impressive fourth outing

Sydney emcee the Tongue has been an enigmatic character ever since he dropped his first album back in 2007. Part battle-cat, part smokey laid-back bluesman, his joints have always fought to contain his versatility. *Hard Feelings* nails the mix. It might be the production, which leans more on electronica than before, or the evenly blended bravado and vulnerability, but consistency and flow reign supreme. Beats are mostly slick and spare, calling to mind Hermitude and 808s-era Kanye. Guest spots are similarly polished, from Jeswon and Ngaiire, to the stunning pipes of Mataya on "You Got Me". It's the Tongue's flow, though, that holds together what might be the record of his career so far. DAN FINDLAY



Billy Gibbons and the BFGs

Perfectamundo

Concord ★★½

ZZ Top guitarist goes solo, throws a loose, groovy party

On his first-ever solo outing, ZZ Top's handsomely bearded Billy Gibbons marries his band's bedrock Texas-blues boogie with more recent obsessions, most prominently Afro-Cuban rhythms. It's the sound of a Havana moon shining down on Rio Grande mud. Gibbons' musical anthropology is loving and loose, with nods to hip-hop and funk (the "Legs" callback "You're What's Happenin' Baby"), Stones-y rock & roll (on "Piedras Negras") and Sixties soul (a tight slide through Roy Head's 1965 hit "Treat Her Right"). Unfortunately it doesn't all come together seamlessly. But the same rumbling gravitas that fired *Eliminator* keeps things flowing.

JON DOLAN



Kersey

Next Step ABK/Warner

★★★★½

Staunch south-west Sydney rapper continues to grow

Over the course of his five albums, Kersey has evolved from battle-rap hero to chart challenging underdog. Here, a reflective tone and unexpected do-as-I-say lecturing displace his shock value swagger, with the enlistment of production-hire outlet, Sinima Beats, coating the tracks with a clean, pop polish. While old habits die hard – snarky jabs at local rappers (360, Allday) remain, and there are few stanzas that don't reference his home town of Campbelltown – *Next Step* is a mark of maturity, dictated by its nostalgic trace of past mistakes and noble attempt to be unbound by circumstance. Not without its cliché cringes, but far and away the MC's most complete and considered work yet.

JONNY NAIL



Jaala

Hard Hold

Wondercore Island/ADA ★★½

Debut record holds a lot of promise for Melbourne act

Recorded in a seven-day blitz with Paul Bender of Hiatus Kaiyote, *Hard Hold* is about as frenetic, playful and delightfully scattered as you would expect from such a condensed creation. That shouldn't be mistaken for thinness though, because there's a lot of ideas to unpack here. There's the scruffy, low slung blues of "Lowlands", the rocky crunch of "Salt Shaker", the spin-out indie jazz of opener "Hard Hold", the latent gorgeousness in closer "Hymn". Singer Cosima Jaala's vocals remain endlessly arresting, warping and snaking in and around the rhythms. Ideas shoot off in all directions, but *Hard Hold* manages to remain focused; a fascinating display of potential.

JULES LEFEVRE



The Sticks

The Sticks

Broken Stone/Remote Control ★★

Debut LP of sonic left-turns from experimental electronic trio

Live, Sydney trio the Sticks have made a name for themselves conjuring improvisational electronic songs. Accordingly, the group's debut is one of wilful experimentation: opener "It Follows You" sounds like the lost theme to a Seventies horror film; track two "Deep Fried" dips into Dam-Funk-on-bad-acid warped funk. Standout "Sidestep" is all celestial synths and angelic vocals, but by album's end you've been sucked through a black hole ("Machine with Concrete") and spat out the other side into David Lynch's darkest nightmare ("In Secret"). It's too scattershot to hang together as a cohesive LP, playing more like a series of intriguing sketches instead of a compelling whole.

JAMES JENNINGS



Young in New York, 1988

Young Digs Back Into His Archives

A lost season of brass, blues and balls rewrites history

Neil Young

Bluenote Café Warner ★★½



Fans, critics and bean counters tend to agree that Neil Young misplaced his mojo in the 1980s. His label sued him for making dud records, and though he won that day in court, it took til *Freedom* for the broader jury to concur in '89.

This latest revelation from his vast *Archives Performance Series* hails from just prior to that popular renaissance, culled from 10 months touring his ensemble blues album, *This Note's For You*. It's not the first to suggest that his Eighties hiccup was purely studio related, but it is the most persuasive proof that his blistering focus as a live performer never waned.

The raw, horny fanfare of "Welcome To the Big Room" sets a tone that bites more than it swings. Young solos just as dirty but more lyrically in blues mode, and the band cranks and sweats no less when the tempo slows for an almost 10-minute smoulder through "Don't Take Your Love Away From Me", or the sleazy creep of "One Thing".

The surprises aren't all this good. A couple of tunes recalled from his highschool band the Squires sound, er, a bit like that. But all of the tracks you know sound better in the heat of these moments and the epic "Ordinary People" crowns a generous serve of unreleased essentials.

M.D.

KEY TRACK:

"Don't Take Your Love Away From Me"



Placebo

MTV Unplugged Universal

★★½

Brit rockers struggle with a format that doesn't suit

Placebo's power derives from their shiny, uncomplicated sound (expertly captured on record by producers such as David Bottrill) and their striking visual sense. Beneath the aesthetics, there's often not much real songwriting going on – which makes them an odd pick for the newly rebooted MTV Unplugged franchise. Quiet and slowed down, without glossy music videos or bold album artwork, these songs are robbed of much of their power. It's not all bad: Brian Molko's voice remains resonant, and the deep cuts will please fans. Early single "36 Degrees" sounds gently nostalgic, and "Hold On To Me" works well with piano and strings. But nothing here truly captivates.

DAN F. STAPLETON



Leah Senior

Summer's on the Ground

Flightless/Remote Control ★★½

Melbourne folk singer's intimate, inviting debut

A song titled "How I Miss the Womb" and music self-described as "green wallpaper, low lamps, blinds drawn" tells you all you need to know about Melbourne-based folk singer Leah Senior's debut: this is insular and intimate music, akin to eavesdropping on someone else's private, prettily conveyed thoughts. Senior's gentle voice is mostly only accompanied by acoustic guitar, the occasional cameo from a cello or flute almost feeling like an intrusion. The lyrics cover well-worn themes like seasons ("Autumn Evening"), the elements ("The Storm") and various landscapes ("Red Dirt"), Senior ultimately succeeding by bringing clever wordplay and an assured sense of self to an album of simple, elegant songs.

J.J.

From the Stage to the Page

It's a Long Way: From Acca-Dacca to Zappa, 1969-1979

Philip Morris

Echo

★★★★



Philip Morris was only 15 when he started shooting for *Go-Set* magazine, but it was the beginning of an association that helped him get up close with some of the biggest stars of the Sixties and Seventies – as he recounts in the prologue to his live snaps of Led Zeppelin in Sydney in 1972, “My *Go-Set* pass got me everywhere”. Morris’s recollections of his experiences with the artists he shot – a who’s who of rock & roll stardom, from Johnny O’Keefe (he was his official photographer) and AC/DC (he was in the studio as they recorded *Dirty Deeds*, and at myriad gigs) to the Stones, Midnight Oil, Paul McCartney and many more – add worthy colour to the book, but it’s Morris’s photos that are the true stars of the show. What stands out most of all is how Australian they are in their framing



AC/DC (with George Young) at a secret gig in Cremorne, 1979

and setting – his live shots often feature members of the audience, a snapshot of how gig-goers were dressing and acting in the Seventies, while the live set-ups themselves are a throwback to a time before giant LED screens and laser lights. Morris was responsible for shooting the live image of Peter Garrett that adorned Midnight Oil’s *Head Injuries* album – the original version (and story behind it) is here – just one of many moments in Australian music history the photographer captured through his lens.

CASS WALLACE



The Dirty Streets

White Horse Alive Natural sound

★★★★

Heavy electric soul from Memphis threesome

The hit-and-miss phenomenon of the blues ‘power trio’ works best when the band’s lead guitar keeps to the low, weighty notes and stays away from meandering solos in favour of robust riffs. The Dirty Streets generally fulfil that requirement, though there is little progression from their previous two albums. Their formula owes a debt to both Blue Cheer and, particularly, Spooky Tooth (as on the highlight “Accents”), along with the finest modern proponents of soul-blues-rock, Howlin’ Rain. The throaty vocals of Justin Toland add extra swagger to a wonderfully rough LP driven by feeling rather than finesse. It’s been done plenty of times before, but when done this well, it is still riveting.

BARNABY SMITH



Danzig

Skeletons Nuclear Blast

★★½

Former Misfits frontman takes a trip down memory lane

Glenn Danzig’s premise of covering 10 tracks that influenced him sounds intriguing, but the results largely disappoint. Some choices work, like Elvis’s “Let Yourself Go”, which mirrors the Presley sneer and swagger Danzig’s incorporated into his own horror-punk allure, and the Troggs’ “With a Girl Like You”, whose garage sensibilities he reveres. Unsatisfying, though, is the interpretation of Black Sabbath’s “N.I.B.”, where the vocals are off-kilter and lack power. Perhaps the most successful cover is the Everly Brothers’ “Crying In the Rain”, as his undulating range adds a veil of dark spice. Interesting, as is its intent, *Skeletons* cannot be judged as a Danzig album as such, more as a quirky intermission.

ROBYN DOREIAN



Jennylee

Right On!

Rough Trade/Remote Control ★★★★★

Warpaint bassist keeps things dreamy and couched

Warpaint’s Jenny Lee Lindberg embraces her regular band’s slippery pulse on her solo debut, even recruiting drummer Stella Mozgawa. Singing in her Cat Power-esque drawl, Lindberg embraces diffuse arrangements and opaque lyrics that don’t exactly value extroversion. Still, the songs slowly assume firmer shape with repeated listens, and tracks like “Never” and “Offerings” stand out among these eerie, meandering lullabies. “Riot” and “White Devil” are more volatile, with screamed male vocals, while “Offerings” is downright hooky by this album’s subtle standards. Still, with nearly every song delivered at a gauzy distance, you wish Lindberg would step closer to the mic and truly announce herself.

D.W.



Cass McCombs

A Folk Set Apart: Rarities, B-Sides & Space Junk, Etc.

Domino/EMI ★★★★★

Singer/songwriter’s warts and all round-up

Cass McCombs is a wry classicist, held in high-esteem by musicians and fanboys but haunting the dead zone between the charts and critics’ lists. This 11-year collection of demos, one-off releases and experimental collaborations has curio merit, but will struggle to win fans not already tuned in. The half-cooked sketches can be a slog, but there are enough gems here to prove a worthwhile document of both his method and his madness. See the psychedelic lope of “Twins” recalling a spacey Tame Impala, and the kooky country of “Three Men Sitting On A Hol-low Log”. At least his voice – a detached and attractively ageless croon – is there to guide us through.

MARCUS TEAGUE



Boots

AQUARIA Columbia

★★★★½

Enigmatic Beyoncé/FKA Twigs/RTJ producer lifts the veil

The producer/songwriter behind ‘80 per cent’ of *Beyoncé* (2013), Florida native Jordy Asher explodes the moodier R&B innovations of that record with this confounding debut. Claiming that “there’s only three things sonically ever happening”, with instruments and sounds periodically dropping in and out of focus, it’s an exercise in subtraction, as Boots dismantles and reassembles just-barely pop-R&B-grounded tracks to create something that’s equal parts polished and fragmented. While Asher’s rap amid the stabbing synths and industrial effects of “C.U.R.E.” is plenty urgent, his vocal never quite fills the space staked out by tracks like “Oracles”. Lyrically, it’s all a little nebulous and unfocused.

GARETH HIPWELL



The Fumes

Bloodless ABC Music

★★★★½

Sydney noir-blues outfit expand line-up, musical scope

On their first two records, the Fumes proved themselves a formidable blues-rock force; *Bloodless*, the band's third LP and first since 2009's *Sundancer*, finds their oeuvre expanding considerably. *Bloodless* sees guitarist/singer Stephen Merry (one of Australia's finest voices, one marinated in life) adding not just bassist Ryan Hazell, but a raft of extra-curricular musicality (harmonica, piano, slide) to the line-up. It makes for a pensive and intoxicating mix of swampy delta soul ("Broke a Chain"), moody Southern rock ("Lonely As You Are") and gothic blues mixed with backcountry biker punk ("Why"). With its blend of peculiarly dust-blown Australian noir, *Bloodless* has been well worth the wait. **JAYMZ CLEMENTS**



Sophie

Product Warp/Inertia

★★★★

Of-the-moment pop guru gathers his hiccupping hits

London producer Sophie debuted with 2013's "Bipp", re-vamping pitch-shifted pop tropes to make ultra-artificial dance music. Two years later he's produced Madonna and Charli XCX and ventured into J-Pop hit-making. This quickie singles collection also sees release as a sex toy and other 'products', but that doesn't mean the tracks can't inspire sincere emotion – see the ballad "Just Like We Never Said Goodbye". Last year's trap-flirting "Lemonade" is the clear highlight, roughing up its sugary skittering with a darker, brasher edge, but other songs lack its manic stickiness. You can hear why Sophie rocketed to fame, but there's too much filler here. **DOUG WALLEN**

Grimes Raises the Stakes

Shape-shifting pop diva ups her game, stays delightfully weird

Grimes *Art Angels* Remote Control ★★★★★½



On her 2012 breakthrough, *Visions*, singer-producer Claire Boucher (a.k.a. Grimes) was an indie-rock fan's platonic ideal of a pop star – blurring moody electro and moodier R&B in music that she made herself on Garage-band, turning the underground into her own diva stadium, all while implying that actual pop success was something she could take or leave. Since then, she's signed to Jay Z's management firm Roc Nation, toured with Lana Del Rey and moved from Montreal to L.A. But the big news on her fourth album is how much she's upped her game as a writer and a singer, giving her music new polish and resonance. *Art Angels* has a sharper, sleeker sound that sneakily suggests she made the leap to working with big-name producers – when in fact, as always, she did everything herself.

KEY TRACKS:

"Venus Fly",
"Life In the Vivid Dream"

Boucher, who recently compared herself to Phil Spector, loves to refract her voice into multi-tracked swirls, making desire, physicality and identity itself seem forever in flux. "I could live in the world like a stranger," she sings on the sombre "Life In the Vivid Dream", and on "Kill V. Maim", she switches genders altogether, singing "I'm only a man/Do what I can". It's the radical hallmark of an artist who loves upending convention, pulling from any style that suits her and making all these surprising gestures seem natural. On "Venus Fly", she gets together with Janelle Monáe for a global feminist floorshaker that sounds like Gwen Stefani on an M.I.A. bender. The title track rides a funky guitar line adjacent to Michael Jackson's "Black or White" and some avant-Britney cooing towards a line that could be ad copy for her transformative eclecticism: "Everything I love becomes everything I knew." **JON DOLAN**



Givers

New Kingdom

Liberator/Glassnote Records ★★★★★

Catchy choruses swamped in too much detail on genre-blurring LP

Louisiana five-piece Givers are aptly named: they come from the 'more is more' school of songwriting, cramming sounds, styles and shifting time signatures into every available space. Members have backgrounds playing in zydeco, jazz and Cajun groups and their influences run the gamut from new wave to world music. They invoke a restless, upbeat energy and prove they have a knack for a big chorus, but this follow-up to debut *In Light* suffers the same fate as its predecessor: despite the talent on display, it's far too overstuffed and leaves the listener aurally exhausted. If Givers learn to withhold even just a little, they may have a shot at being a band people love rather than casually appreciate at a safe distance. **JAMES JENNINGS**



Lanterns On the Lake

Beings Bella Union

★★★★

Atmospheric third LP from emotive Brits

This English quartet's previous LP, *Until the Colours Run* (2013), was accomplished but overwrought, with its ambitions towards a sweeping, cinematic grandness. Even Radiohead, a major influence, have a sense of humour. This is all very dramatic, thanks to swelling orchestral flourishes, stirring percussion and the expressive vocals of Hazel Wilde. The finest tracks are those that are simplest, such as "The Crawl"; elsewhere the record is characterised by intricate instrumental textures and bombastic production. The result is a heavy melancholy, and though there is plenty to admire – including Wilde's enigmatic lyrics – stamina and patience are required. **BARNABY SMITH**

A Star is Born

Perth YouTube sensation breaks out with a stellar debut album

Troye Sivan

Blue Neighbourhood EMI ★★★★★



At just 20 years of age, the South African born, Perth raised Troye Sivan is already a prominent player in the scene of career-hopping millennials. Until recently he'd been coasting as a famous YouTube personality with over four million channel subscribers, as well as being a budding actor (he starred in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, and as the title character in the successful South African franchise *Spud*).

But to be cynical and dismiss *Blue Neighbourhood* as bottled zeitgeist music from another child star is to be wilfully short sighted, for its charms are many. At its core, Sivan's soft and honeyed vocals command attention, filled with the kind of heady and unchecked emotions that can only be mustered up by someone at age 20. It hovers amid electronic production that manages to be

KEY TRACKS:
"Blue", "Wild",
"Ease"



densely intricate and helium light. Single "Wild" is all hitching beats and catching breaths; "Talk Me Down" rests on a pillowy orchestral bed with an unshakeable chorus hook; "Fools" falls down a deep slope of house synths.

The best is further in the detail: the deluxe version's "Blue" has co-writer Alex Hope's vocals curling through the delicate piano instrumentation. There are, of course, lyrical platitudes aplenty, but Sivan delivers these quiet gems of young wisdom with enough humility so as to be endearing rather than precocious. **JULES LEFEVRE**



Grave Pleasures

Dreamcrash Sony

★★★★★

Finnish Goth rockers weave a romantic, macabre web

Rising from the smouldering ashes of Beastmilk, Grave Pleasures' debut record is a potion of demented Gothic pop-rock. The album was recorded in an allegedly haunted studio, and embraces the eeriness (real or imagined) of such a setting. The band's musical past has produced a patchwork of usually distinct genres and sonic contradictions. While the apocalyptic chants of "this will be the end" are propelled by a catchy twin guitar riff in "No Survival", "Lipstick On Your Tombstone" is fuelled by slinky punk-pop. Flirting with themes of dreams, reality and humanity as a post-apocalyptic species with an expiration date, Grave Pleasures toast the inevitable end in the only way they know how. **SALLY MCMULLEN**



Nots

We Are Nots Heavenly

★★★★½

Grotty post-punk with an ear for the old school

Memphis quartet Nots wring just the right amount of anxious momentum and spiky unrest out of a rumbling nest of distorted guitars and synth. Their 27-minute debut is scrappy and immediate, stacked with short songs riding out primitive repetition. Natalie Hoffman's punky yelp exudes cool, and she has a knack for angst-ridden mantras as well as bratty asides like "We know you're capable of words". As much seedy fun as these songs are, they start to sound naggingly similar to each other by LP's end. Rather than a deal-breaker, it simply makes it all feel like a sustained fever dream, punctuated by slightly different tactics as Nots chase the spectre of post-punk's prickliest bands. **DOUG WALLEN**



Steve Martin and Edie Brickell

So Familiar Rounder

★★★★

There's nothing funny about this album of tasteful folk and roots

Renowned funnyman Steve Martin has long since proved his deep chops as a bluegrass banjo-picker; if you're looking for wild and craziness (or even any discernible vocal presence), you'll be disappointed with this follow-up to his debut LP with Edie Brickell, 2013's *Love Has Come For You*. He's happy to play the tasteful backing partner in songs that honour musical traditions and mix them up a little, too. "Won't Go Back" endearingly recalls the 1980s college-hippie pop Brickell pushed up the charts with the New Bohemians; the elegant piano ballads "I'm by Your Side" and "Way Back in the Day" shade nicely between jazz and country. **JON DOLAN**



CeeLo Green

Heart Blanche Atlantic

★★★

CeeLo gets his goofy groove on again, but the magic is gone

Five years after the ridiculous, impeccably catchy, chart-conquering "Fuck You", CeeLo Green is trying on his funky-weirdo Prince shoes again. This time, they don't quite fit. His fifth album, *Heart Blanche*'s campy soul grooves come and go in spectacular waves, lifted by some of Green's best-ever vocal work, but are drowned by the album's pretentious tendencies – see "Robin Williams", a ponderous requiem for dead celebrities. He's far better on his most simple pop tunes, like the fun "Est. 1980s" and the sweet "Music to My Soul". In an era where disco has found a second life all over the pop charts, Green's throwback barely makes a thud. **BRITTANY SPANOS**



Baroness

Purple Abraxas Hymns/Cooking Vinyl

★★★★½

Tragedy births Baroness's finest record to date

Purple documents the trauma of a near-fatal bus crash Baroness were involved in in 2012. Frontman John Baizley lyrically recalls it and its opioid aftermath, beginning with "Morningstar", its blusterous drums and riffs evoking the propulsion of the 37-year-old into the windscreen and back; tasting his blood, his left arm decimated. What makes the narrative so powerful is the amalgam of new drummer Sebastian Thomson and bassist Nick Jost: a compelling whirl of proficiency. Crafted in Baizley's Philadelphia basement, *Purple* is raw, pounding and affecting, yet ultimately sensitive and declaring hope. The most dynamic, robust guitar album this year. **ROBYN DOREIAN**



Fourteen Nights At Sea

Minor Light Hobbledehoy

★★★★

Melbourne post-rock collective summon instrumental doom

Fourteen Nights At Sea are aware that true heaviness comes not from giant riffs or pounding rhythms, but from the art of restraint. It's an understanding they employ throughout their third album, nowhere more so than on the five-and-a-half-minute "Minor Light", its droning, bubbling soundscapes and sense of impending dread engulfing you despite a complete absence of melody. The other five songs adhere more closely to the post-rock rulebook employed by the likes of Neurosis, Cult Of Luna, Mono and Isis, albeit without any vocals and a bigger emphasis on surging, downbeat, textural melodies; the perfect soundtrack to the desolate photo that adorns the album cover.

ROD YATES



Jeff Lynne's ELO

Alone in the Universe Columbia

★★★★½

ELO still successfully mining for AM gold 45 years after forming

Since ELO's split in 1986, the highest praise the mega-selling band were usually afforded was that of 'guilty pleasure'. 2001 comeback *Zoom* stalled, but then 1978's "Mr. Blue Sky" became a synch staple and a lauded 2014 live return caused a critical re-evaluation that jettisoned the 'guilty' prefix. It may lack nourishment, but *Alone in the Universe* is still comfort food of the highest order: familiar, warm and instantly satisfying. Nothing here rivals their biggest hits, but singer-songwriter-multi-instrumentalist-producer Jeff Lynne, ELO's sole constant, proves he's still got a good ear for a classic pop-rock tune, making *Alone* a worthy addition to ELO's sizable catalogue.

JAMES JENNINGS

The pontiff at the Vatican, October



A Papal Sermon With a Beat

Progressive pontiff preaches peace on a surprisingly proggy album

Pope Francis *Wake Up!*

Believe Digital ★★★★★



Pope Francis' message of peace and economic justice has been an inspiration to millions of people all over the world. How's his music? Um... infallible!

Wake Up! sets his speeches and prayers (in Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and English) to pop, rock and classical compositions performed by Italian session musicians, several with roots in the country's Seventies rock scene. You can hear that influence in the tubular synth noodling that opens "Annuntio Vobis Gaudium Magnum!" Other songs nod to Francis' South American background. The only song in English, "Wake Up! Go! Go! Forward!" is the most rocking, riding heraldic metal riffs and a fire-tongued solo into a sermon on activism.

Usually, the music – some of which is quite lovely – veers closer to the New Age neoclassicism of Vangelis or Kitaro, a warm fit for Francis' tender, elegant speaking voice. But if the sonics bathe us in soft Sunday-morning light, the message is pure punk-rock redemption. Speaking to an amped-up Brazilian crowd on "La Iglesia No Puede Ser Una ONG!" he entreats, "I want the noise to go out, I want the church to go out onto the streets." Keep bringin' the noise, Your Holiness.

JON DOLAN



Arca

Mutant Create Control/Mute

★★★★

Genre-busting auteur stokes thrills but lacks focus

Venezuelan producer Arca returns for more murky mood-setting. His sprawling second album ranges from diffuse to almost operatically robust, most often evoking a haunted house collapsing on itself. Many of the 20 tracks strike an ominous chord despite not feeling completely developed. "Sinner" combines muddy beats and trickling piano, while churchy organ turns wonky on "Soichiro" and the closing "Peonies" warbles through pitch shifts. Full of shuddering turbulence, the longer title track is the best thing here, and Arca could have greatly improved the other compositions if he'd devoted the same degree of attention to them. So much of *Mutant*, though, is fleeting to the point of frustration

DOUG WALLEN



Julien Baker

Sprained Ankle Spunk

★★★★½

Stirring debut from promising Memphis belle

To describe *Sprained Ankle* as 'intimate' is an understatement, such is the hushed, vulnerable cooing of this 20-year-old. Backed solely by either acoustic or electric guitar or piano, Baker's songs are mostly elegant meditations on loneliness and youth, evoking the softer side of Martha Wainwright and, on her best tracks ("Brittle Boned", "Blacktop"), the idiosyncratic songwriting of Jesca Hoop. Occasionally she does veer towards the predictable ("Everybody Does"), yet such blemishes are redeemed by the vitality of the stark instrumentation: Baker is a refined folk-influenced guitarist to go along with her expressive and quivery vocals. A compellingly introspective debut.

BARNABY SMITH

Mac's Double Trouble

Fleetwood Mac's sprawling 1979 double album gets expanded even further

Fleetwood Mac

Tusk Warner ★★☆☆½



After *Rumours* conquered the known universe in 1977, Fleetwood Mac pretty much had a blank cheque for their follow-up. They sure did cash it in, and it was not at all what the record company or the fans expected. *Tusk* is a strange, sprawling double album that finds its three singer-songwriters pulling in different directions.

It's also the record where Lindsey Buckingham goes into full Brian Wilson mode as far as production is concerned. His songs layered multiple stringed instruments in odd combinations and utilised off-kilter rhythms, while his vocals veered between silvery whippers and hiccupping yelps. The likes of "The Ledge", "Not That Funny" and "What Makes You Think You're the One" were loose, twangy, fuzzy and offbeat, in stark contrast to the plushness that pervaded *Rumours*. The title track is possibly the most bizarre follow-up single to a

KEY TRACKS:

"Tusk", "Sara", "Think About Me"



megahit album in pop history, featuring chants, shouting, background chatter and the University Of Southern California Trojan Marching Band. Even more bizarrely, it was a Top 10 hit.

Despite the new approach, Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks continued to do what they always did – the former's lovelorn ballads ("Never Make Me Cry") and mid-tempo piano-pop ("Think About Me"); the latter's West Coast romantic mysticism ("Sara", "Angel").

It's a long, strange trip, whether you go for the single re-mastered CD, the 3-CD expanded version with outtakes, demos and remixes, or the deluxe 5-CD, two-vinyl LP, one-DVD version, which includes two live discs.

BARRY DIVOLA



Love

Reel to Real High Moon

★★★★½

Love-ing reissue treatment for sprawling 1974 album

Seven years on from the kaleidoscopic *Forever Changes* (1967), Arthur Lee had become an increasingly mercurial figure, assembling a new band in the wake of the underwhelming *False Start* (1970) ahead of this, Love's seventh album. *Reel to Real* is a curio in Love's history, employing funk and disco amid a general sound comparable to Chicago's brass-happy AOR, while songs such as "Which Witch Is Which?" revisit Lee's psych-folk heyday. The patchy original LP is for completists only, yet the 12 bonus tracks (outtakes, alternative takes and rehearsals) are intriguing – mostly they're bouncy rock jams. An enlightening addition to the catalogue of one of rock's most quixotic talents.

B.S.

The Sound of a Nation Waking Up

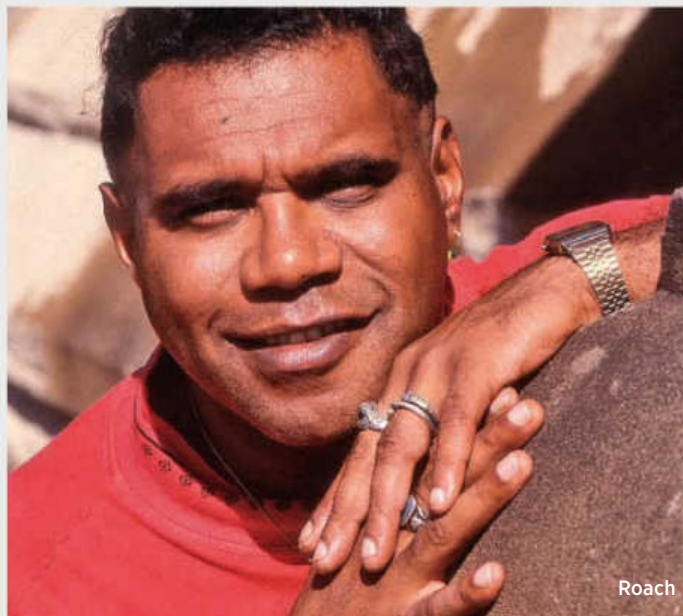
Archie Roach *Charcoal Lane* 25th Anniversary Edition

Festival/Warner ★★★★★½



Archie Roach OAM is an incomparable storyteller – as Messengers guitarist Steve Connolly discovered at a gig in the late Eighties. Connolly, along with Paul Kelly, would co-produce Roach's towering 1990 debut. Urged by his Uncle Banjo Clarke to commit his own stories to song, Roach, a survivor of the Stolen Generations, stunned pre-Mabo Australia with his eloquent, gently-delivered chronicle of the experience of living black in a nation preoccupied with floating dollars and recession and yet to say sorry (the iconic "Took the Children Away"). His ultimate transcendence of dispossession, homelessness and alcoholism ("Down City Streets") continues to elate. The bonus tracks here find Roach performing joyfully alongside late wife Ruby Hunter in a string of 1990 live recordings, while the reissue's excellent covers include Marlon Williams/Leah Flanagan's heartsick "I've Lied", Paul Kelly/Courtney Barnett's barebones "Charcoal Lane", and fired-up homage "The Children Came Back", spearheaded by rapper Briggs and featuring Gurrumul and Dewayne Everettsmith.

GARETH HIPWELL



Roach

Rolling Stone

Christmas

TECH GIFT GUIDE

Wireless Speakers Take Flight

After years of being a niche item, Bluetooth speakers are everywhere, from bedrooms to the beach. Now a new breed of wireless systems is pushing the technology (and volume levels) to new heights, offering rock-solid sound and an array of gee-whiz features, whether

you're updating your stereo system, building your own home theatre or just jamming on the go. Want hi-fi sound without the cables and floor speakers? Need a speaker you can take on the Serengeti? Or just want something to charge your phone? Read on. **JOHN LONSDALE**



The Next Level

Sonos Play 5

RRP \$499 per speaker

Those familiar with the Sonos Play family of wireless speakers will probably think they know what to expect from the latest incarnation of the Play:5. They'd be wrong, as this is a major step-up, even for a company that regularly provides new functionality in the form of free updates. Sure, the Play 5 has gotten a handsome facelift, but it has also been redesigned from the ground up, with a completely new speaker design. Straight out of the box it delivers significantly more bass – it's got 6 drivers, including 3 mid-woofers and 3 tweeters, but it's when you use the Play: 5 in conjunction with the new Trueplay tuning system that you notice how much of an improvement in sound this brings to the party. The easy-to-use Trueplay app maps your room and adjusts the Play:5 (or any other Sonos speaker) to sound great no matter where you've got it placed in your home. The Play:5 comes in black or white and can be placed horizontally or vertically, depending on your preference. Like previous incarnations, it works as a stand alone speaker as well as a stereo pair, but we thought it sounded incredibly impressive as a single unit.

Supercharged Traveller

Braven 805

From \$200

The 805 travels well – it can rock a party and charge your smartphone through its USB port at the same time – but it sounds good enough for your home. Pro move: Connect two 805s to produce big left-and-right stereo audio wherever you are.



The Nouveau Standard

Devialet Phantom

From \$US1,990

The price is no joke, but this rugby-ball-size, 750-watt French powerhouse can fill the great hall of your chateau in the Loire Valley with deep-bass thunder without breaking a sweat. You can play Spotify or Tidal playlists through its dedicated smartphone app, and expand it up to 24 units if you want to soak multiple rooms in champagne sound.



More Hi-Fi, Less Wi-Fi



Jack-Of-All-Trades

Peachtree Nova 220SE Digital Amp

RRP \$US1,599

Audio nerds will lose it for this jack-of-all-trades amp that provides up to 350 watts per channel of power to any system and has a built-in digital-to-analog converter for optimising lossless audio from streaming or hi-def services like Pono or TIDAL. Those in the know reckon that a good digital to analog converter is worth its weight in gold.



Sculptural Turntablism

Rega RP10 Turntable

With Cartridge from \$US6,495

This skeletal turntable looks cool, but there's a method to the madness: Stripping away unnecessary mass means less vibration for sweet-sounding vinyl. Rega have been making hi-end turntables the traditional way for decades, so when they decide to mess with tradition, you know it's for sound technical reasons. The additional cartridge (needle) will be a substantial part of the price.

Affordable Killer

UE Roll

From \$150

This small water-resistant Bluetooth speaker delivers surprisingly rich sound for the price, plus you can attach it to anything with its integrated bungee cord – and it looks great.



Indestructible Beats

Fugoo Tough XL

From \$US330

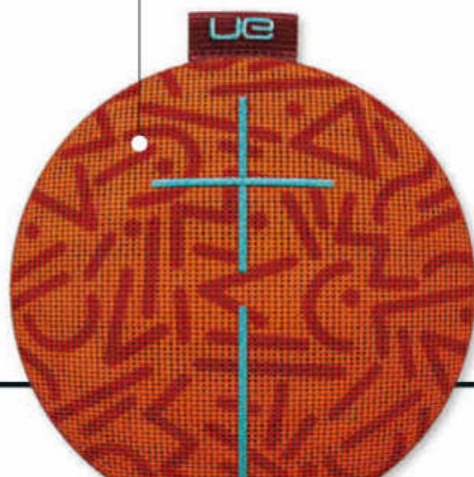
The Fugoo Tough XL sports an impact-resistant outer cage protecting a sealed water- and sand-resistant main body. You can listen to its 360-degree sound for 35 hours per charge, and even put in a request to Siri or Google Now if you're somewhere with Wi-Fi. (But why would you be?) You can also buy a carrying strap. But its coolest trick? Drop it in three feet of water, and it will still play all day.

The Little Cube That Could

Mass Fidelity Core

From \$US599

This 6x6x4-inch Bluetooth cube delivers full stereo sound for 12 hours per charge, pervading your room with its Wave Field Synthesis technology. One unit will cut it, but you can connect up to eight overall.



Simple High-End Hi-Fi

You no longer need a rack of equipment and giant speakers to fill your home with great sound. Here's how to assemble a killer system with a small footprint **By Jesse Will**

ROCK BOX

The tiny Sprout amp's onboard DAC makes digital sources sound like classic vinyl.



What's the least-complicated, best-sounding system I can get?

Ditch your old receiver for the **PS AUDIO SPROUT** (\$799; psaudio.com), a 50-watt-per-channel amp that excels at handling sources both old (vinyl) and new (digital, via Bluetooth, USB or coaxial); the compact chassis hides a phono pre-amp, a headphone amp and a DAC. Then build out your system with the **BOWERS & WILKINS CM5 S2** (\$1,600 a pair; bowers-wilkins.com), a space-defying bookshelf speaker with an uncommonly rich midrange, thanks to its tough composite drivers and one-inch tweeters separated from the cabinet via a ring of cushioning gel.

I want to get back into records but ditched my old setup. Where should I start?

All you need is a turntable with a built-in phono pre-amp, plus powered speakers. Plug the **AUDIO-TECHNICA AT-LP120-USB** (\$300; audio-technica.com) into the 75-watt-per-channel **AUDIOENGINE A5+** speakers (\$399; audioengineusa.com), and you'll probably be blown away.



Can I get a multiroom system with high-end sound?

For audiophiles, whole-home wireless systems present a trade-off: The convenience means you have to accept compressed sound quality. But the new **BLUESOUND** system (components priced from \$299; bluesound.com) plays 24-bit hi-res audio files from sources like HDtracks.



Music Gear For Boffins

Gift ideas for the special musician in your life, whether they're a professional rocker or just a big dreamer **By Matt Coyte**



The Next-Gen Gibson

Gibson Les Paul Standard 2016 HP

From \$US3,149

Gibson's 206 range offers a choice between Traditional models that embrace the classic action and feel of yesteryear, and High Performance, which come loaded with new technology such as next generation GFORCE automatic tuning, advanced pick-ups and the Soloist necks, built for faster shredding and modern playing styles. Tough choice Gibson! We'll take one of each.

The Mixer of the Future

Soundcraft Ui-16

RRP \$1,099

These days having a mixer that can be controlled from a slick interface on your iOS or Android device saves both time and real estate in your portable rig. The Soundcraft Ui-16 has an integrated Wi-Fi router allowing you to plug in your mics and your speakers and mix your show from wherever suits you. Perfect for DJs and solo performers.



In-Ear Workhorses

Shure SE215 Sound Isolating Headphones

RRP \$195

Musicians have been using Shure's in-ear headphones for years as part of their on-stage monitoring set-up, but now the affordable SE215s bring this sound isolating experience (the design shields over 90 per cent of the ambient noise) within reach of everyone, not just stadium rockers.



Double Time

Keeley Electronics 30ms Double Tracker

RRP \$US199

The classic sound of Abbey Road's double-tracking emulation comes to life thanks to one of the guitar pedal-world's most revered geeks, Robert Keeley. This effect does more than just convincingly double your sound – you can tweak it in myriad ways to create subtle to trippy effects.



Smashing Distortion

Wren and Cuff Eye See Pi

RRP \$US225

The Electro Harmonix Big Muff pedal is a classic, and purists spend a lot of time looking for lost or rare variations of the revered fuzz box. Wren and Cuff specialise in making replicas of rare Big Muffs including this ode to the integrated circuit models of the Seventies. Used by Smashing Pumpkin Billy Corgan, it sounds like a 747 taking off.



WORTHY
Suffragette is a
movie that
matters

The Struggle Is Real

The early battle for women's rights gets the prestige-drama treatment **By Peter Travers**

Suffragette

Carey Mulligan, Helena Bonham Carter, Meryl Streep

Directed by Sarah Gavron

★★★★

WHY NOW? YOU ASK YOURSELF that question while watching *Suffragette*, a vibrant, vigorous movie about the fight for voting rights for British women in the early part of the 20th century. Then the light dawns. The sad truth is that gender bias has never stopped spreading its toxins and I don't mean just the current race for U.S. President.

Is the movie a true story? Not really. Carey Mulligan's character, Maud Watts, is a fictional composite meant to represent the women of the time, content to work and be exploited by their bosses and husbands until, well, they aren't anymore.

Meryl Streep shows up for a spiky cameo as militant advocate Emmeline Pankhurst, who suggests that her ladies stop being genteel and start throwing bricks. Then there's Emily Wilding Davison (Natalie Press), who thought she could win attention to the cause by stepping in front of King George's horse at the 1913 Epsom Derby and getting herself stomped to death. She was right. A high price for a media spotlight.

What makes *Suffragette* a relevant rabble-rouser, besides Mulligan's fierce, affecting performance, is the way it won't bow to the kind of Hollywood formula that tsk-tsks about how bad it was then – only to wrap everything up with a comfy banner that says, "You've come a long way, baby." The feminist struggle continues. And it pow-

ers through this movie even when the contours of the story flirt with the trite. It helps that two women are at the helm – director Sarah Gavron (*Brick Lane*) and screenwriter Abi Morgan (*The Iron Lady*).

In lesser hands, Maud's odyssey from workslave to activist would have been a catalogue of female anguish. We see Maud slaving at the laundry alongside her husband, Sonny (Ben Whishaw), and too near her handsy boss, Mr. Taylor (Geoff Bell). Another co-worker, Violet Miller (the excellent Anne-Marie Duff), pushes her to join the Women's Social and Political Union. Still, Maud is reluctant, preferring to hide her head at home, caring for her husband and young son. When fate intervenes – as it does in this type of film – Maud is called on to testify in Parliament and

to feel genuine rage when the prime minister rejects the voting-rights bill. In tandem with pharmacist Edith Ellyn (a brilliant, bracing Helena Bonham Carter), Maud finds the stirring of a revolutionary inside herself. The price is losing everything.

There are times when the movie piles on troubles with too heavy a hand. At other times, *Suffragette* blazes with a fire that cannot be denied. And you see it all on Mulligan's wonderfully expressive face. For all the rich detail added by cinematographer Edu Grau, production designer Alice Normington and costume designer Jane Petrie, it is that human face that makes this feminist history relatable to this generation and to generations to come. In a sea of Hollywood escapism, *Suffragette* – flaws and all – is a movie that matters.

Truth

Cate Blanchett,
Robert Redford

Directed by James Vanderbilt

★★★★

THIS PROBING LOOK AT television news is a trip into the dark side of journalism. CBS producer Mary Mapes (Cate Blanchett) climbs a slippery slope when she organises a segment for *60 Minutes II*, with CBS News anchor Dan Rather (Robert Redford) at the helm, suggesting that a young George W. Bush pulled strings in 1968 to dodge Vietnam by taking Texas Air National Guard pilot training.

Juicy stuff, especially in light of the Swift-boat scandal that tainted John Kerry's campaign. Bush-bashing could shift the election. Mapes feels confident thanks to her research team, including Lt. Col. Roger Charles (Dennis Quaid), journalism prof Lucy Scott (Elisabeth Moss) and freelancer Mike Smith (Topher Grace). But the team relies heavily on supporting documents reportedly written in 1972 and 1973 by Bush's commander, the late Lt. Col. Jerry B. Killian, that label Bush a no-show. When the Killian documents are discredited, Mapes is fired and Rather is sent into retirement.

End of story. Or it would be if Mapes hadn't written a 2005 book, *Truth and Duty: The Press, the President, and the Privilege of Power*, an apologia of sorts. And if screenwriter James Vanderbilt (*Zodiac*), making a rattling-good directorial debut, hadn't seen the book as a basis for a hell-raiser of a movie.

That it is. Blanchett burns on a high flame, and Redford finds the wounded dignity in Rather. But not enough to give the Mapes team a pass. The real story here is how the CBS bosses, tasked to entertain and win ratings, pushed to get the piece aired before it was ready and then pushed to throw Mapes and Rather under the bus. It's not a pretty picture, but it gives this movie the harsh ring of truth.

By the Sea

Angelina Jolie,
Brad Pitt

Directed by Angelina Jolie

★★½

WRITER-DIRECTOR ANGELINA Jolie's attempt to emulate European art cinema is a slow, sodden, stupefyingly dull take on a 1970s marriage gone bad. Jolie plays Nessa, and her husband, Brad Pitt, is Nessa's hus-

and setting cinematic sail with the doomed 1820s voyage of whale-ship *The Essex*. The wash-up is a nautical yawn.

Unlike Herman Melville's famous read about the rabid hunt for a white whale, *The Essex* wasn't steered by obsessed Captain Ahab. As recounted to Melville (Ben Whishaw) by surviving shipmate Thomas (Brendan Gleeson), *The Essex* was led by a greenhorn captain



(1) Helen Mirren and Bryan Cranston talk movie shop in Hollywood drama *Trumbo*. (2) Pitt and Jolie in the dull-as-dishwater marital crisis *By the Sea*. (3) Cate Blanchett and Robert Redford strategise in *Truth*.



band, Roland. The Pitts, it must be said, suffer gorgeously. Vacationing at a swank hotel in Malta, they spy through a peephole at newlyweds next door (Mélanie Laurent, Melvil Poupaud). Nessa and Roland barely talk. When they finally do, you pray they'll shut up. "I smell fish," Nessa says, sniffing. Nah. What stinks is the movie.

In The Heart of the Sea

Chris Hemsworth,
Benjamin Walker

Directed by Ron Howard

★★

THE WORLD HAS NEVER seemed too fussed with knowing more about the true story behind epic tome *Moby Dick*. That hasn't stopped Ron How-

George Pollard (wet Benjamin Walker). Cue stereotypical issues with decision making and respect, especially as first mate Owen Chase (stoic Chris Hemsworth) is a whale whisperer.

If none of that hoists your mainsail, Howard's aimless adventure won't either. *Moby Dick*'s heartbeat of crazed pursuit is nowhere in sight. Instead, step aboard for maritime standards (Stormy weather! Splintering masts!) in a limp tale of survival.

As we drift in no gripping direction, perhaps the biggest blunder is the 1820s whalemen becoming spokesmen for contemporary environmental concerns. Such a forced anachronism cements the disappointing pointlessness of Howard's fishing trip. **BEN MCEACHEN**

Trumbo

Bryan Cranston, Helen Mirren, John Goodman

Directed by Jay Roach

★★★★½

A HOLLYWOOD SCREENWRITER goes broke fighting for his principles. Sounds like a biopic slog, and sometimes it is. Luckily, *Trumbo* has a powerhouse Bryan Cranston to light a fire under the moldier clichés in John McNamara's script.

Cranston plays the hell out of Dalton Trumbo, who got rich writing movies in the 1930s and 1940s. Trumbo had a big personality to match his ego. He'd write in his bathtub, booze and cigarettes at the ready, barking at wife Cleo (Diane Lane) and their three children if they disturbed him.

Trumbo's bubble burst when he joined the Communist Party. In 1947, he was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee, along with nine other screenwriters. He refused to name names and spent nearly a year in jail. As part of the blacklisted Hollywood 10, Trumbo lost job, home, fortune and famous friends, and used a pseudonym to write *Roman Holiday* and *The Brave One*, winning two Oscars that he couldn't take credit for.

Kudos to director Jay Roach for not wallowing in misery. His movie is bracing and buoyant when Trumbo takes on gossip gorgon Hedda Hopper (a wicked Helen Mirren) and writes cheapies for the King brothers (Stephen Root and a hilarious John Goodman). When Kirk Douglas hired Trumbo to write *Spartacus* in 1960, the Commie witch hunt was exposed as the sham it was. Witch hunts haven't gone, they've gone global (ask the folks at *Charlie Hebdo*). Cranston shows us there's nothing retro about watching Trumbo in his glory, speaking truth to power.

Driving to a Dignified Death

Distinctly Aussie take on a road trip with a difference

By Michael Adams

Last Cab to Darwin

Michael Caton, Ningali Lawford-Wolf

Directed by Jeremy Sims

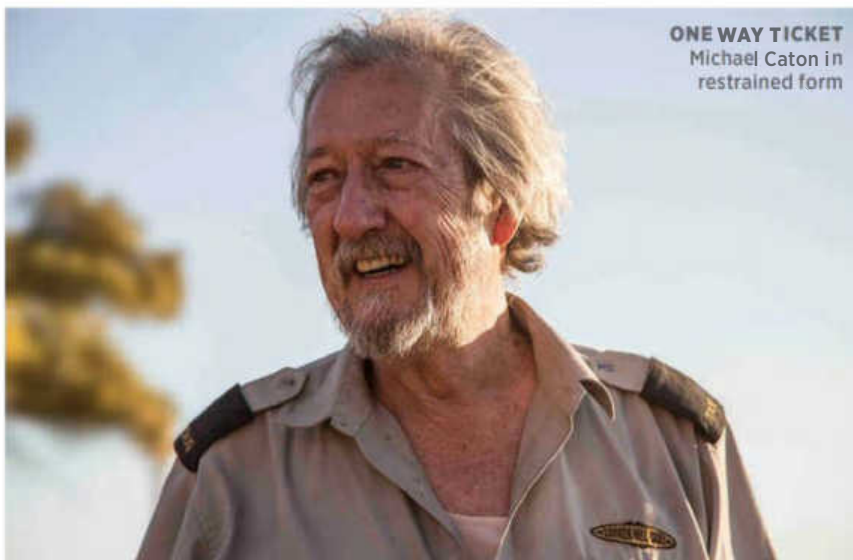
★★★



When Broken Hill cabbie Rex gets the bad news that his cancer is back and gonna kill him painfully within three months, he drives 3,000 kilometres to Darwin to embrace death

with dignity under recently passed euthanasia laws. That's the premise of Reg Cribb's play of the same name – loosely based on the real 1990s case of taxi driver Max Bell – now opened up cinematically by director Jeremy Sims.

As Rex, Michael Caton is a picture of restraint, refusing to play to his natural comic charm. His cabbie's an old-school Aussie bloke: content to pass hours talking shit with his hi-vis mates at the boozier; unable to admit loving his spikily-sweet Aboriginal neighbour Polly (Ningali Law-



ONE WAY TICKET
Michael Caton in restrained form

ford-Wolf, superb). How this irascible fella finds himself on his road trip, aided by indigenous larrikin Tilly (Mark Coles Smith in a star-making, show-stealing performance) and kindly British nurse Julie (Emma Hamilton), is the real heart of *Last Cab*. The outback journey also lets Sims and cinematographer Steve Arnold

demonstrate visual flair without resorting to tourist-ad flash.

But the dual destinations – death and Darwin – prove a bit of a cul-de-sac. Jacki Weaver's doctor never convinces, and ultimately the film seems on surer ground with its feelgood sub-plots than its seriously big question.



Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation

Tom Cruise, Jeremy Renner

Dir. by Christopher McQuarrie

★★★★

Ah, Tom, we can forgive much Scientology nonsense when we see you for-reals clinging to an Airbus during take-off at the start of the film. It's an exhilarating, insane and nonsensical sequence, pretty much like the rest of this spectacular. The IMF team is disbanded and Ethan Hunt has to go underground to expose the Syndicate... blah-blah... operatic shoot-out in Vienna... blah-blah... finale chase and fight in London. Eminently forgettable, immensely entertaining, with Swedish actor Rebecca Ferguson a great addition as duplicitous agent Ilsa Faust.



Vacation

Ed Helms

Directed by John Francis Daley

★★★★½

Using Mark Ronson & Mystikal's "Feel Right" early in this film sets the tone. Like that song, *Vacation* is a crassly derivative blast that you can't help but like. This reboot has grown-up Rusty recreating his childhood trip to Walley World, with the trip a framework for set-pieces and self-mocking self-discovery. Going balls-out for gross-out gags, from pedo jokes to poo baths, this is always tasteless but often eye-wateringly funny. There's game work from Ed Helms, Christina Applegate, Chris Hemsworth and Leslie Mann, but the show's stolen by Steele Stebbins's foul-mouthed bully tyke.



The Man From U.N.C.L.E.

Henry Cavill, Armie Hammer

Directed by Guy Ritchie

★★★

Like James Bond films of yore, this is as much about style and Savoir faire as it is action and adventure. Not that we'd trade in Daniel Craig for Henry Cavill and Armie Hammer, but there's breezy fun here you no longer get now 007's gone to grit. This 1960s-set reboot of the TV show has the boys as rival U.S.-Soviet agents teaming up to retrieve a nuclear warhead that's fallen into the claws of Aussie Elizabeth Debicki's delicious femme fatale. Director Guy Ritchie orchestrates the hijinx with dry wit, going for laughs as often as thrills.



Ricki and the Flash

Meryl Streep

Directed by Jonathan Demme

★★★

Ricki is a rock chick ageing disgracefully, giggling in dives and paying the bills by bagging groceries. But her daughter's suicide attempt brings her back into her estranged family's orbit with results that are funny, dramatic and TV-movie mawkish. Unsurprisingly, the ace Streep makes us believe she's a guitar heroine belting out Jenny Lewis-penned tunes and she spars excellently with real-life daughter Mamie Gummer, Kevin Kline and an affecting Rick Springfield. This is unusually fluffy stuff from writer Diablo Cody and director Jonathan Demme, but it hits a sweet MOR spot.

THE WEEKND

[Cont. from 61] “I think that’s where the stars aligned for me. When I see an opening” – he punches his fist in his palm – “I penetrate it.”

The song was released that September. “If people didn’t like it, I would’ve been like, ‘Let’s sweep it under the rug.’ But people were fucking with it.” The song went to Number Seven in the U.S. and marked a turning point for Tesfaye – the beginning of his mainstream conquest. He followed that with “Earned It”, from the *50 Shades of Grey* soundtrack, a slinky BDSM slow-jam that sounded like nothing else on pop radio and rode to Number Three on the U.S. charts. Then he went into the studio with Martin to craft some hits of his own.

“His whole operation is just genius,” Tesfaye says of the producer. “I was told he doesn’t do this very much, but he would

and it doesn’t test me at all. I could make a girl go like this” – he does a little shimmy-dance – “with a beat. It’s very easy. I did it so much I can’t do it anymore. But pop music? That shit’s hard, dude.”

THREE DAYS LATER, TESFAYE IS across the country at Studio 8H in NBC’s Rockefeller Center, at a rehearsal for *Saturday Night Live*. Across the room, host Amy Schumer is posing on a chaise lounge in a black-lace Eighties Madonna dress. Tesfaye is soundchecking the same two songs he always does: “Can’t Feel My Face” and “The Hills”. *SNL* wanted him to do “In the Night” instead, but it’s a tough song to sing live, and he didn’t feel ready. Even he can recognise his limitations: “I’m not known as the greatest singer right now,” Tesfaye says, “but I’m also not known as the guy who fucking sucks, you know?”

“The worst thing anyone can say about an artist is, ‘He could have been great.’ I was always scared of being that guy where it’s like, ‘He could have been big.’”

actually sit on the floor with us and come up with ideas. I feel like usually he’ll collaborate, but he’s not as passionate or as hands-on. I felt superhonoured, you know? It was some real Michael-and-Quincy, John Lennon-and-Paul McCartney stuff.” Martin ended up co-producing three songs on the album: “Can’t Feel My Face”, “Shameless” and the forthcoming single “In the Night”, another Jackson homage that could become the Weeknd’s biggest hit yet. “If it works, it’s going to be huge,” Tesfaye says. “It’s like that load that you’re trying to hold in – I’m just waiting for the money shot.”

The Weeknd’s mixtapes, and even *Kiss Land* to an extent, relied a lot on atmosphere and mood, their hooks cloaked in a woozy codeine haze. *Beauty Behind the Madness* is more like a cocaine bump: shorter, tighter, more energetic. “It’s all about songs for me right now,” he says. “The production can be cool and crazy-sounding, but that’s just special effects. If you can’t strip it down and play it on piano, it’s not a good song.” He cites Radiohead as an example: “I love Radiohead, they’re one of the greatest of all time. But can you break down their songs and play them on piano? Maybe not.”

To Tesfaye, writing pop songs is a whole lot harder than writing cool songs. “Some people are like, ‘Oh, yeah, just sell out and do pop music.’ So *you* fucking do it, then! It’s not easy. Can I be honest with you? What all these kids are doing right now? I could do that in my sleep. I listen to it,

After the camera-blocking, a producer comes over to ask Tesfaye’s team if he’ll shoot a couple of promos with Schumer and cast member Kate McKinnon. At first they decline, but Tesfaye knows what a big deal *SNL* is, so he agrees. He looks nervous as he takes his mark and stares at the cue cards. “Are you ready?” Schumer teases. “It’s not easy...”

They do a few takes, Tesfaye playing the straight man while Schumer and McKinnon improvise wackily. He’s funny – just the right amount of deadpan. When he asks about a typo on one of the cue cards, Schumer playfully smacks his shoulder: “Well, look who can read!” The director says they have it, and Schumer turns and gives Tesfaye a hug: “You were so good!” An embarrassed Tesfaye smiles, makes two finger-guns and blows his brains out.

At the broadcast Saturday night, Tesfaye is joined by surprise guest Nicki Minaj, who raps on a brand-new remix of “The Hills”. But the highlight for him was meeting Louis C.K., who was “just chilling backstage”. “He was in the middle of a conversation,” Tesfaye says, “and I was like, ‘I don’t know if I’m ever gonna see you again, so in case I don’t, I just want to tell you how much I admire your work.’ I don’t think he recognised who I was, but he was supersweet.”

Tesfaye has had lots of these idol encounters lately. There was the time he met Leonardo DiCaprio at an L.A. club. “I don’t get star-struck, but I get star-struck

when I see someone like that. Our tables were beside each other, and the owner of the club knew how important he was to me, so he introduced me.”

Or the time he met the Band’s Robbie Robertson at Canada’s Walk of Fame. “Robbie’s from Scarborough too, actually. I met him and Peter Fonda together – those guys know how to party. I’m an avid film-watcher. Growing up, I loved anything Scorsese and De Niro, and Robbie’s been Scorsese’s friend for years, and consulted on Scorsese’s music. So he’d tell me stories about them. I live for these moments.” And then, most charmingly, there’s the time he simply *overheard* a conversation between LL Cool J and Denzel Washington at an Oscar party. “That’s when I was like, ‘You know what? I think I fuckin’ made it, dude.’”

At 3 a.m., after the *SNL* afterparty, Tesfaye will board a private jet that will take him to Austin for his headlining slot at ACL fest – his last festival of the year before he shuts down to prep for his own tour. There will be fireworks and a pyro display during “The Hills”, and 30,000 people singing along to “Can’t Feel My Face”. During “Often”, he’ll change the hook to say, “Ask how many times I come to Texas/I say Austin!” and then afterward, he’ll run offstage into a waiting SUV and enjoy a police-motorcycle escort on the way back to his hotel.

It’s a long way from his first big festival gig, in 2012 at Coachella. “Coachella was the first show I did in the States, and I hated my performance,” he says. “I was scared shitless. I got offstage and thought I did pretty good, then I watched the tape, and it was a nightmare. I saw all the comments, and I wanted to kill myself. I remember telling my agent, ‘You need to book me as many shows as possible. That guy onstage is not a star. That’s not a legend.’”

So Tesfaye got to work. He took some dance lessons, trying to build confidence and learn how to perform. And he played lots of shows. “I was performing my ass off,” he says. “My touring was booming. Everybody was confused – I don’t have a hit song, and I’m doing two nights at Radio City? I’m not saying I’m Beyoncé, but I feel like I went after it and nailed it.”

When it came down to it, Tesfaye was driven by fear. “I think the worst thing anyone can say about an artist is, ‘He could have been great,’” he says. “I was always scared of being that guy where it’s like, ‘He could have been big. He could have been a star.’ I was afraid I’d see somebody else up there and be like, ‘You’re trying to tell me they’re better than me? Why? Because they’ve got a couple of smash records? I can do smashes. I could figure it out.’”

“And to be honest with you, it’s been, what, a couple of years now? And it feels great. I feel great.”

Albert Hammond Jr

The Strokes guitarist and solo artist on being aggressive with cops and loving Thor
By Rod Yates

The last record I bought

It was mine [*Momentary Masters*] when it came out! I always buy my albums when they come out. I like to see the whole experience. Even when they have pre-orders I'll pre-order my record just so I can see what it's like for a fan to get it. If there's any mistakes I can go yell at someone! [Laughs] I've been doing that always: I download it, I pre-order it, and I buy it on vinyl. Did the shop assistant recognise me? No, they had no idea. They actually even had it stocked as the artist was Momentary Masters, not Albert Hammond Jr, that was funny.

My last meal would be

If you're on death row, I wouldn't want a big burger and be all farty and bloaty as they're injecting me. I don't even know if you can enjoy a last meal to be honest, with all the adrenaline and emotions that are running through. I don't think I'd want to eat. I'd want a big plate of drugs. [Laughs]

The last time I was starstruck

My wife and I go to screenings in New York, and we went to see *Age of Ultron*, and saw Chris Hemsworth [who plays Thor]. He's really tall and handsome and he walked up and I shook his hand. I think my wife and I had a little crush on him.

The last time I threw a tantrum

Today. I was in the car and I was throwing a tantrum to my wife. I was just tired. We barely slept and I'm sick and I was just being a little kid. What was it about? Everything and anything.

The last time I played drunk

Probably *First Impressions of Earth* tour. I probably played on all kinds of stuff on any one of those shows [laughs]. Could I function? Looking back on it now probably no, not great, I would have played a lot better had I not been. I think there's this weird belief that [being high] takes an edge off, so you can feel a little freer. It's a fine line to do that, being freer and actually losing playing well.

The last thing I stole

I don't think I ever stole anything. Put it this way, in the early days when [the Strokes] were playing and we would get like \$40 for a show, the band would give it to me to hold onto 'cause they knew that I would keep it safe.



“The last record I bought? It was mine!”

The last time I ate something I regretted

On the road I usually regret whenever I decide to eat something too late at night. Weirdly enough I'm so sensitive now that I don't drink or do drugs, that eating too late can leave me waking up feeling terrible. It's not a serious thing to most people but it's quite a serious thing for me. I get depressed after a while if I do that.

The last time someone was rude to me

Unintentionally in the car. We were leaving Salt Lake City, and we're in a big sprinter van, carrying a lot of gear in the back, a lot of weight. And we're in the carpool lane, and this woman out of nowhere pulls right in front of me and I had to slam

on the brakes and move the car a bit. Luckily for the Nintendo skills of my youth I was able to avoid any collision. The thing is, I'm a nice guy, but when it comes to authority at the airport or the police, I immediately just enjoy being aggressive with them. I don't know what's wrong with me, I've really got to stop doing it. It's not fun for anyone around, but I immediately become a little obnoxious.

The last time I exercised

I try to exercise every day. But it was probably a week ago 'cause the tour's been pretty crazy. If I wasn't on tour I'd exercise five days a week. I do different weight training.

The last book I read

I read a few [at the same time]. I'm reading *Sapiens* [by Yuval Noah Harari], and I always try to get my hands on a Robert Ludlum book, just for pure entertainment. They're so much fun.

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Momentary Masters

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